

THE  
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

DECEMBER, 1880.

Fina's Aunt.

SOME PASSAGES FROM MISS WILLIAMSON'S DIARY.

I.

*From Miss Sophy King in Switzerland to Miss Williamson in  
Old Street, London, W.*



DEAREST MISS WILLIAMSON.—

Your two letters have come flying through the ravines and over the waterfalls, and the sunlight on the plains and the half-way storms, and through all the freshness as well as the less agreeable whiffs from the village. We are very comfortably encamped at our hotel; mamma is wonderfully well for her. My father is in Scotland, but we are not lonely, and have found several friends here. Chief among them are *your* friends the Arnheims, who only went down to Interlaken this morning—we follow on Monday. Mr. Arnheim has an engagement to play at the concerts there. Fina, the little girl, has started up wonderfully, and reaches her father's shoulder.

I told her I should be writing to you, and she sent you her love and begged me to tell you that she mends

her father's clothes now, and adds up the bills, and keeps all the money. She has grown very like her poor mother, whom I remember seeing at your lodgings in Old Street. I wonder if those very disagreeable people, her relations, are living near you still : that pompous Miss Ellis and the Colonel, and the silent younger sister and the delightful old lady : and I wonder if you, too, are in your usual corner, where I can see you as plainly as I can see mamma in her chair on the terrace opposite. This is written from a broad green balcony overhung with clematis ; all the people come out of the dining-room and sit here to look at the mountains.

"The day the Arnheims were here they took me out for a long day in the mountains. Mr. Arnheim led the way, Fina and I followed. One cannot talk, but one goes on climbing ever through changing lights, from one height to another, higher and higher still. We left autumn at the foot of the mountain, and after a time found ourselves in summer and spring once more. Far above, striking the blue sky, hung winter snows and crystals, but round us was spring. A flood of fragrant Alpine flowers spread by every rocky ridge, along every Alp and plateau, rhododendrons crimson incandescent ; violets and saxifrage, and light iris lilies with a delicate pale fragrance ; mountain moss and wild azalea, all indescribably faint and beautiful. It seemed as if our souls and senses were refreshed and purified by this calm ether, and able to receive the sacrament of nature, the outward sign and the inward grace. Far beyond one blazing slope of green and crimson studded flowers, and across the vast valley, rose the great might and silence of the mountain-chain, and higher still a line of clouds was striking sail in solemn rank and drifting towards the peaks. A sense of awe-stricken, all-embracing beauty, of all-enclosing power and mystery, came upon us as we stood together. I felt as if I had lived for years alone with Fina and her father. He, too, seemed to feel some of the same companionship, for he turned from her to me and said very gently :

" ' Fina will never forget our walk together, nor the wonderful things we have seen to-day. My old violin has often talked of it, but it never showed us what we have seen to-day.' And then with a half sigh, ' How her mother would have enjoyed it all,' he added.

"But though we all enjoyed our walk, it was too long. Mr. Arnheim was ill for two days, I am sorry to say ; Fina and I have scarcely been beyond the green terrace of the hotel since then. I am not romantic as you know, and so I like sitting where I can see the road and the people passing. There go two Swiss maidens. I wish I could draw them for you. They seem to be carrying two of the mountains on their backs. I don't know whether they are going to set them down in sight of the new hotel or elsewhere. Now our artist goes by. He is a Mr. Bracy, and staying in the hotel. He walks about with his head on one side, and his portfolio under his arm. Sketching in such a place as this seems to me a ludicrous process. You might as well attempt to sketch a sonata with a penny whistle as to set down the Eiger on one

page and the Wetterhorn and its crown of cloud on another. There would be some sense in it if he were to draw that nice load of wood and its white horse.

"I don't know how to describe everything here. Life begins at dawn and goes on till starlight. The terrace itself is rather a choking place, scented with heavy perfumes, but through its green windows and delicate curtain of hanging tendril and white blossom, a great sight is revealed. Rise, noble Eiger, with dizzy heights and battlements piled against time, against men, against winds and storms and seasons. There broods frozen winter, eternally arrested on the summit. As for the autumn in the valley, it is a lovely and plentiful show; yellow crops not all reaped yet, bronzed ears and sheaves in the homestead, flax swinging from the galleries of the chalets, cut wood for winter piled against the outer walls. The roar of the torrent is in the air, and mingles with the pastoral sounds. All over Switzerland the rush of running water echoes, from the desperate streams that course in the valleys, to the sweet high mountain rivulets flashing their way to the plain.

"There is one solemn end to our terrace, the other clatters with knives and forks, and is within view of the narrow village street. A deep gutter has been cut in the centre of the road, crossed at intervals by foot-stones. The children, with their brown faces and white heads, sit swinging their bare legs over the water; they stand on the steps of the chalets, they peep from crazy balconies that start from every corner, loaded with green and crimson flower-pots; and then there are figures everywhere climbing ladders, leaning from upper windows, as they do in German picture-books. A horse led by a baby comes to drink at the trough at the corner of the road; a go-cart rolls by, dragged by a pretty young mother—she has tied her child by a linen cloth to the shafts; the baker shuffles from beneath his gable, our host of "The Bear" appears for a moment in his doorway. Opposite is the country coffee-house, with "Milk and Beer Shop" painted in rude letters over the doorway; and through the open lattice and behind the red curtains you see the country-folk refreshing themselves at wooden tables. Bowls piled with beautiful red and gold are set before them. It is only a feast of apples, but Paris himself might have plucked them. The Golden Age never produced a more sumptuous crop, blazing crimson and lighting the dark kitchen. Then, beyond all the clamour of the little village, the voices, the bleating of goats, the splashing of waters, you come upon the little church, silent in its slated nightcap, watching over the tranquil graveyard where people lie asleep, as befits good reformers, not beneath the shadow of the cross, but under strange tabernacles and devices, among weeds and flowers, with the rocks of the Fishhorns to bound the view and the valley opening to the westward.

"You see I have taken the opportunity of your absence to rhapsodise a little. How glad we should all be if there was any chance of your coming, if only for a fortnight. We will use all our influence with Mr. Gredig's

sallow son to get you a room on the proper side of the house, with the view. Do think of it and of all you will have to write down in your beloved diary.

"Always your most affectionate

"SOPHY KING."

## II.

I have almost made up my mind to burn my diaries. I have been looking them over to-night, and there they are lying in a heap, a cairn upon the floor. Each year passing by has added its stone. My neighbour, Josephine Ellis, came in to see me, and exclaimed at the pile. I told her it was the funeral pyre of my familiar blue devils. There they were, all dated and docketed. "Have you never kept a diary?" I asked.

"What should I put into a diary?" said she. "Nothing ever happens in our house. I was quite glad when the little page-boy tumbled downstairs yesterday, and broke the teacups. But Bessie has matched them already, and everything is the same again as ever."

"I don't write my diary when I have anything better to do," I replied. "It is only when you are a very long time without coming to see me, or when Sophy King does not write, that I have recourse to it."

Living alone as I do, busy and trudging about all day with my lessons, and tired at night, most of my dissipation comes to me in the shape of pen and ink. For my public opinions, indeed, I subscribe to the *Daily News*; but for my private feelings I have long kept a diary. The extra blank sheets are very convenient to vent one's moods upon, and there is a certain amusement in the £ s. d. column, down which the figures go tumbling headlong to the terrible total at the bottom. But I confess that, with the best good will in the world, there are times when a clean ruled page is not much comfort, when a well-balanced column is of little avail, when what you want is a voice—a hand, rough or clumsy though it be—something alive that is not the eternal reflection of your own self in the glass or on the paper before you. In many ways, however, I am well contented with my lot. It seemed a hard one at first, and perhaps things don't change; but one suits oneself to the circumstances round about one. In comparing one life with another people often forget to take states of mind into consideration, and do not realise how habit and natural adaptability often make a sort of artificial happiness when none other might seem possible. "Leave human nature alone," said a French lady two hundred years ago, "and it will make some happiness for itself out of the things round about it." In many ways I like the monotonousness of my existence, my early walks, my return home. I have friends without a name who look a kindly greeting; I have a correspondent to whom I owe many a happy half-hour; I live a great deal outside my quiet room as well as in it. My landlady keeps my home bright for me and in good order, and welcomes me back to cheering cups of unstinted bohea. In the morning, when I set off on my day's peregrinations, the street looks pleasant if the sun shines, and



friendly even in the mist. It is not one of your dreary, stucco, suburban rows; but a little, old, cheerful, vulgar street, with a certain stir of humanity and life about it, and a barber's shop at the corner.

And here let me note down a curious little discovery I have made since my life in Old Street began. There is nothing in reality more regular than this apparently erratic street life that we see flowing past as though without method or reason; but people whose business takes them at certain hours in certain directions know how the same figures recur at the same places with a curious order and persistence. As I go to my lessons in the early morning I am met again by certain faces at certain corners. Some of them seem friends almost after a week or two of silent recognition. I know the trim clerks on the way to their offices, and three organ men who meet under the same tree in Kensington Gardens, morning after morning, to settle the plan of their day's campaign. I disliked them at first, but by degrees became quite interested in their well-being. A pug dog, anxiously followed by a lady and gentleman, always meets me at a certain tree along the path, and looks up in my face inquiringly. At the gate is the apple-woman, sitting at her stall. All these people have become quite habitual and component parts of my mind by degrees. We meet in sunshine; we meet in rain. Shall I ever forget one lovely morning when some miracle had been worked for us, and the mists had descended in a silver vapour, through which we humdrum people drifted, silently appearing, vanishing, transfigured in a pale dazzling cloud of light? Another day was even more beautiful, when the whole world of the Gardens suddenly flashed into glittering, diamond-like hoarfrost, every blade and twig, every dead leaf, every iron railing touched by this magic. But these are holidays. Who does not know London's workaday livery of heavy, dull grey, the laurel bushes and trees of changeless hue, the dark, straight rows of smut and brick? The skies seem made of bricks, the houses of smut and mist. The world goes out suddenly; the beautiful, shining, gay world, all alight and alive, all full of the voices of children and the hum of strollers, seems blown out with a puff; and the people are gone too. One day you are walking in company with a thousand bustling fellow-creatures, in windy, sunshiny places, where the very stones at your feet are shining and full of hope; the next, you are plodding—no, not plodding, it is too hopeful a word—you are standing still on one foot, shuddering, and not knowing where to step next.

The weather of our souls is not altogether unlike this outward weather which is supposed to affect our bodies more especially. People say that music only can express certain moods and things. Weather seems to me to have a language of its own which everybody understands, even animals and even growing things as well as philosophers and idiots. Governesses should be philosophers, I suppose, but I am afraid my poor little pupils, who are everything but idiots, tell which wind is blowing not from personal but from reflected experience. Clang! clang! clang!

the bell shakes in the east wind, and jars and jars the unfortunates who are of irritable nerve and temper, and who are condemned to come out in it while the grim reverberations smite and swing and strike those who are already stricken. Happy, and comfortable, and thick-skinned people do not feel such passing sounds and influences any more than children do. Alas! for the nervously irritable, there is a whole world of undiscovered misery, of chill atmospheres, of impatient annoyances, into which they drift. And those who fall victims to these idiotic demons, mere soulless worries of the moment without meaning or tragedy to dignify their pranks—demons with whom battle is ignominious and victory almost as unworthy as defeat—may well grudge the precious hours of life that pass struggling with minor and intolerable worries.

I remember meeting Josephine Ellis in the east wind one day at the street corner, and being quite frightened by her face, it looked so grey, so set, so utterly stony and miserable. I spoke to her, but she didn't notice me and hurried on. The church bells were clanging overhead, and the clouds tossing up into the high blue sky. The sky always looks highest at the corner just by the steeple, where all the roads meet, where the cabs and carts cross each other's track, and one old street goes winding uphill by the church, while the other meanders off into the country, past the suburban gardens and villas, past Hammersmith and its bridges and stagnant ditches, into the open fields. Another road, joining on to this one, goes back to the very heart of London, with a steady rumbling pulse of cabs, carts, carriages, all laden. Besides these, there was the foot-stream, into which I saw Josephine engulfed.

I watched her tall, quick figure sliding through the crowd. She was dressed all in black, for the family were still in mourning for poor Mrs. Arnheim, the second daughter, who had died abroad the year before. Josephine in her flowing robes was a noble-looking woman, with a lovely mouth and a hooked nose, not a snub like her sister Bessie's; nor was her hair red, but black, waving and frizzling like the Greek ladies' hair on the coins. Her face is often grey, often dull. It was bright enough when I knew her first, seven years before she passed me in the east wind that day. Long afterwards she came and told me what had happened that day, and my heart sank for her.

She has an odd hard plausible way of relating the most intimate things. Her manner is at times just like her sister Bessie's, and I could shake her for it, but her looks are Mrs. Arnheim's, who is gone, and her heart is her own; faithful, gentle, diffident, reserved, unchanging. Poor Josephine! How I should have liked to see her happier! She said that, as she hurried along on that bewildering walk through the crowd, the sound of the church bells seemed to be her own story proclaimed in some noisy, obstreperous fashion: "Away with him! Away with him! Go! Go! Go! Go! Go! Send him off!" the bells had seemed to say while she pushed quickly forward, not letting herself dwell on much else beyond the difficulty of passing in and out among the many

people, who were crowding the narrow pavement. To her it was all like a dream from her own heart, and she wondered to find herself quite alone in this crowd, elbowing, shouldering, pushing, while all the while the incessant bell kept up its maddening clang of parting.

## III.

Josephine Ellis at thirty might have been a handsome happy woman, with a home and more to do than she could find time for, with many cares and anxieties, and a thousand things to occupy her, with a child or two to tend, or with small means perhaps to eke out to the uttermost (which is in itself a profession), with cheerful noise and bustle in her life, and plenty of coming and going, of healthy fatigue and peaceful rest—all this might have been hers, and besides and beyond it all a blessing of faithful love and companionship; but, unfortunately for herself, she was of good family, well-connected, accustomed to every comfort, devoted to her mother, yielding and obedient to the elder sister, who had ruled the house ever since Josephine could remember. A shabby middle-aged doctor of humble extraction, without any practice to speak of, and with a patched and shabby home in Pimlico, was not to be welcomed as a husband, except in defiance of every law which she had been brought up to look upon as sacred. She had been little more than a child at the time of her sister Mary's elopement, but she could remember the dismay it caused. Poverty she did not fear (though she somewhat exaggerated its terrors), but remorse she feared, and renewed anguish for her mother; and she dreaded her sister's blame and her friends' shoulder-shrugs. And then he, though so poor, though of such humble origin, ventured to reproach her; he was rude, he was angry. "If she loved him, why did she hesitate?" he asked; "if she did not love him, it was *he* who would wish to break it off. She must face it; she must be perfectly simple and honest about it." His vehemence filled her with fears of what he might demand from her in the future.

It is not one of the smallest difficulties of life, that of being perfectly true and single-minded in the midst of a great network of influences, of which the ropes and strings and threads pull from generations and generations back, and spread out in every direction. When Josephine broke off her engagement, she scarcely knew what she was doing. She hoped things would come right. She said one thing, she meant another, she did what seemed to her best, but her heart resisted. Josephine was weak, afraid of the Colonel and Bessie, and full of tender solicitude for the dear old mother who loved her children, but whose love and longing for their happiness only seemed in one way or another to bring so much trouble and sorrow upon them. "He" said she did not love him enough. It might be so. She had seen him a dozen times, perhaps, but it seemed to her she knew every look and line in his face as well as she did her mother's well-loved seams. When he was angry with her, she felt angry for him, angry with herself. Ah! if he thought she did not love him

enough, it was better for him to be free, and not tied to a half-hearted woman. So Josephine said "Good-bye." It was easily done; too easily done, she thought. She wrote to her lover to meet her in Kensington Gardens that east-windy autumn day, and there, by the pond, among babies and nursemaids, to the plash of the dull ripples, and to the sound of the children's voices and the greedy gabble of the waterfowl, with mists rising blue against the stems of the trees, she let his warm hand drop and turned away alone, strangely light of heart as people are who have made up their minds, very sad as a woman may well be, who is turning away from life's happiness, from its cheer and interest, to a chamber, swept, indeed, and garnished, and empty.

It is true there are married people and unmarried ones in the world, and some of the married live utterly alone, and some of the unmarried have their hearts full and overflowing, and live married to the lives and interests of others. But Josephine Ellis was not one of these. She had not energy of character or force of will enough to compel circumstances. She was going home to a lonely life and she knew it. She had spared her mother a cruel pang and she grudged it. She had sent him from her, and it was she would remember and he who would forget in time. This also she knew and accepted. But presently, as she walked along and the bells began to clang aloft once more, every note seemed to her like a crash of pain falling on her heart,—every stroke seemed to buffet, to bewilder her. She could have cried out loud, only she was too well brought up to make a disturbance in the street, and so she trudged on, crossing the road under a horse's nose and heedless of the driver's cry. As she was turning the corner of the street that leads to her home in Old Palace Square, she saw some little children in rags with fluttering pinafores, dancing hand in hand to the tune of the very bells that sounded to her like a knell. Then she reached home at last. There was the house with its broad front and usual row of windows, the blinds were not down, there were no mutes standing at the door to show to others that a second funeral had taken place, that a tender friendship was dead and buried away by the Round Pond.

A long time of waiting followed, while she hoped, she knew not what, and nothing came of her hopes; and then she began to be afraid, but nothing happened. Then she thought she hated John Adams (that was the Doctor's name), until one day by chance she saw him in the distance, a long way off, at the end of a street; and then she felt her whole heart melt with forgiveness. But he did not see her, and walked on his way.

Facts cannot be changed, but in time we can change ourselves, with help from new things to push away the old ones; but for poor Josephine, so few new things or thoughts or events came to make a difference, that at thirty she was the same woman she had been at twenty-five, less five years of hope, and youth, and confidence. She did not fall ill, but she dimmed as people do. Her brightness faded, and her hair fell out of its pretty crisp waves,

"She wants change," said Bessie the tyrant, sharply, when she saw her mother anxiously watching Josephine with soft squirrel-like eyes. "Thomas is going abroad. Let her go with him." But Josephine protested she did not want anything, only to be left alone.

Thomas was Josephine's and Bessie's elder brother. He had retired from the army with a colonelcy when he married the second time, and had settled down as a country gentleman in Sussex. On the present occasion he had got a cough, which gave him and his good-natured wife no little anxiety, and had come up to town to consult a doctor about it. The starched colonel had been struck with the change in Josephine, and complained of her dress to his wife.

"Josephine don't make anything of herself," he said; "she was a pretty girl not long ago, but now she is a perfect scarecrow. My mother looks the youngest of the two. I wish you would give her a hint or two, Rosa."

But, notwithstanding Rosa's excellent hints, Josephine's complexion did not improve.

I have vagued away in a sort of circle round my diaries still heaped on the floor, and Josephine standing between me and the lamp. She was perfectly composed, and looked as if she had never done anything but tie her bonnet-strings. The window was open, and the huge still stars were glowing over the opposite house, the lighted panes of which looked like lanterns.

"I am waiting for a servant to fetch me," said Josephine. "Thomas and Bessie won't let me stir without one, and it isn't worth a battle. One thing more," she added, "I wanted to tell you. I have had a letter from Fina, and a few lines from her father. He persists in refusing to let us send him one farthing of Mary's money. I think it is very wrong. He drags this child from place to place, and lives in a strange, miserable, hand-to-mouth way, when he might have enough, and welcome."

"My dear," said I, "don't ask me what I think. No wonder Mr. Arnheim is sore, remembering how he has been treated. An honest man doesn't like to be so treated. Your brother once called him 'adventurer' to his face."

"He calls him 'that fiddler' now," said Josephine, with a faint smile. "He seems to think it equally disgraceful, and is quite furious because Mr. Arnheim won't take the money. Ah! it is true what you say, honest men can't bear such mean suspicions. Do you know," she went on, "I sometimes think, if it had not been for Bessie and Thomas, who always agrees with her, we might have all made it up years before our poor Mary died. I sometimes think things might be different, even now. But oh! Mary ought not to have left us as she did," the girl continued with a sudden outburst of emotion. "It half-killed mamma, and she would have died, I know she would have died, if I too had deserted my post."

I scarcely knew how to answer Josephine's outburst. She stood trembling for an instant, and then all the moment's emotion seemed to



pass away, and there again stood the set, handsome, fashionable goddess I was used to see. The gods, we know, are forbidden to weep, and perhaps some such decree had been issued to the Ellis household, for Josephine forced back her tears.

At that instant an interruption came in the shape of a crash outside the door. Mrs. Taplow looked in demurely.

"Miss Ellis's servant has come, ma'am. The poor boy has met with an accident over the bannisters. He don't seem *much* hurt," added Mrs. Taplow considerably, for fear we should be alarmed.

#### IV.

People bestow strange gifts, and leave odd legacies behind them, which are not mentioned in their wills nor taxed by a paternal government. Besides his money in the funds, his landed estates, his handsome family plate, Mr. Ellis had left his temper to his two eldest children. The two younger daughters, Josephine and Mary, took after their mother. Josephine succumbed to the family demon, and poor Mary had fled from it with Francis Arnheim, the "adventurer," as Thomas called him. The story of her marriage was a dreary one; but it contained one little episode, which has been told elsewhere, and which I cannot think of still without some emotion—a meeting, a reconciliation, when mother and daughter, after years of estrangement, by a happy chance, ran into one another's arms one summer evening. Mary was forgiven, but that was all. Her family would not accept her husband, and she, being a proud woman and true wife, went away with him once more, and not very long afterward had passed beyond all estrangement and all reproach. She died at Munich, tenderly watched and cared for to the last. The poor musician remained abroad; he could not face the people who had made his wife unhappy for so long; he could scarcely forgive her mother. Josephine, the youngest sister, who had been faithful in a timid way, was the only one of the family he ever wrote to. He would touch none of poor Mary's money. He could keep the child, he said; the interest of her mother's fortune might accumulate. Fina would some day appreciate her little fortune, the more because her up-bringing had been modest. A musician's life belongs to towns, and Arnheim wandered about Europe with his violin and his little daughter, from one city to another, from one concert to another, carrying his loneliness and his patient music. He was not a great musician. He was a conscientious and painstaking man. With Mary he had been happy, and purposefull, and hard-working. Without her he was all lost and at sea.

I could understand what had occurred at the time of Mary Arnheim's marriage, when I heard the Colonel and his sister talking about Josephine one day. I had gone with a message to Old Palace Square. It seemed as if it were some grim rehearsal going on of what had happened there before. After all, events are only combinations out of people's own characters, thoughts, and wishes. Again and again we watch the same

histories repeating themselves, and one day we discover, to our surprise, how large a share we have had ourselves in things which have befallen us apparently from without.

When I called on that occasion, Josephine had gone off to some week-day service, of which there are a great many at our Parish Cathedral. The peaceful old lady in her soft Indian shawls sat, owl-like, in her corner, watching us sleepily. The Colonel was pacing the room and announcing, with immense decision, that he was going to the Club. Bessie was finishing her notes at the writing-table. You had only to look at her back as she sat unflinchingly dotting, crossing, and despatching her missives to see what a fund of energy was strapped in with her leather belt and silver chains. The Colonel's wife, who had been an heiress and accustomed to her comforts, was lying on the sofa, uttering the most placid audacious suggestions.

"But after all, if Josephine wished it, why didn't she have him?" said Mrs. Colonel to her mother-in-law.

"As it happens, she didn't wish it," said Bessie, suddenly joining in, and flinging the words over her shoulder. "Josephine never wished to leave her mother; and I don't know why Rosa should interfere."

"Interfere!" said Rosa, who had a sort of feather-bed manner when Bessie attacked her. "Interfere? I only asked a question. What is he like, Bessie dear?"

"I cannot tell you. He is no friend of mine. Josephine made his acquaintance at the hospital, and not under her own mother's roof."

"It don't do; it don't do!" the Colonel said, stopping short in his perambulations, and settling himself in his tight coat. "Young ladies shouldn't meddle with hospitals and doctors. They are all very well in their proper place, and a man may do as he likes; but a lady should always have some one with her—a servant, if nobody else can go."

This sapient remark was greatly approved by Miss Ellis, who emphatically endorsed it with "That is also my humble opinion. So I have always said from the first."

"A servant! That might be very awkward," said Mrs. Thomas, reflectively.

As she spoke, the door opened and the red head of Hoopers, the page boy, who had been specially engaged to chaperone Josephine, appeared in the door. "If you please, Miss," said Hoopers mysteriously, "there's a gentleman rung at the bell. He ask if the family were alone, and I told him as how Miss Josephine was out. So he said as how Miss Ellis will do, and I thought as——"

"What is all this?" says Miss Ellis, wheeling round. "Go down directly, Hoopers, and send Burroughes up."

"Please'm, Mr. Burroughes, he have a friend dropped in—he says as how he can't be rung up no more."

"I had better see about it, Bessie," said the Colonel, briskly marching off, delighted at having something to do.

"No, Thomas," said Miss Ellis. "This is a woman's province. I will speak to Burroughes. Show the gentleman into the library, Hoopers."

Here Hoopers, who was certainly a very vulgar boy, began making signals with his thumb and winks and signs over his shoulder, to indicate that the stranger was close behind him, and the Colonel, who had gone to the door, ran up against a tall loose-jointed man, who had come up and now confronted the Colonel somewhat cavalierly.

I could guess who it was. A man about forty, rather shabbily dressed, with hair already turning grey, and a brown hatchet face. When he spoke, some slight north-country tone betrayed him, but his voice was low and deep and his words measured. He did not seem in the least disconcerted by the phalanx of ladies and arm-chairs, nor by the commanding aspect of the Colonel. He looked round quietly, with bright, shaggy eyes.

"I asked for Miss Ellis," he said. "I was told Mrs. Ellis was an invalid. My name is John Adams. You may have heard of me from——"

"From my sister Josephine," the Colonel answered haughtily. "It is perhaps just as well she is out. If you will come down with me, Mr.—Dr. Adams——"

"I have nothing to say to you in private," said the shabby man, looking doubtfully at the spruce one. "I wanted to speak to Mrs. Ellis."

"My mother, as you know, is an invalid, and must be spared discussion," said Miss Ellis. "Anything you may wish to say will be listened to elsewhere."

"Why not here?" said the old lady, seemingly interested, and speaking very vigorously, while, to my amusement, Mrs. Thomas rose from the sofa, came forward, and said in her most languid tones: "Be so good as to come a little nearer. Mrs. Ellis is rather deaf."

"I don't know why my coming should trouble you, ma'am," said the Doctor, striding up the room, and utterly ignoring the two wardens at the door (where, by the way, I could see that little wretch Hoopers grinning). "What I want to say is soon said. I admire your daughter very much, and I asked her to marry me, as you may perhaps have heard. There seemed to be family difficulties which at the time I did not sufficiently allow for, and I am afraid I was impatient and harsh. It has since occurred to me that, perhaps, as you did not know me, you imagined I was behaving in an underhand way. I therefore determined to come and ask you for her hand before speaking to her again; and now I hope I may be allowed to see Josephine when she comes in."

"Oh, no, no, no," cried the old lady nervously, and greatly startled. "Pray don't do anything of the sort." And Miss Bessie, recovering herself, came quickly to the rescue.

"You are very much in error if you imagine any representations you can now make will influence my sister's feelings. She has assured us that her mind is made up, and that she has plainly and positively told you so."

"Are you quite sure her mind is made up?" said Rosa, once more reflective.

"Perfectly certain," said Miss Ellis.

"And you must allow me to add," cried the Colonel bursting in, "that I heartily congratulate her on her good sense. It is a most unsuitable match for a girl of her position."

"There is no matter for congratulation, if what I hear be true," said the Doctor haughtily. "I have no doubt we should not suit each other in the least. I came in perfect sincerity to you and yours, and I have been received with impertinence. You may tell her I shall not trouble you or her with any more advances. If she changes her mind she can let me know." And he turned and marched out of the room without another word.

"Well, I do feel small," said Mrs. Thomas.

There was a dead silence. Then the storm broke. Miss Ellis burst forth in her fury at me, at her sister-in-law, at the unlucky Burroughes, who was rung up and rung down. When Josephine came home from church, poor Mrs. Ellis was in hysterical tears; Mrs. Thomas had locked herself into her room; the Colonel was fussing and fuming like the funnel of a steam-engine.

Her mother clung to Josephine. "Oh take me to my room, take me to my room. Don't leave us alone. Bessie is so angry, poor dear. That dreadful man was here, and frightened us all, my child."

"What did he say, mamma?" said Josephine.

"He called us impertinent. He—— Oh, my Josephine, do not leave me."

"Let us forget him altogether," cried Miss Ellis. "Never let me hear his name any more."

Miss Ellis might say what she liked, but we all remembered our visitor, and not without a certain respect. John Adams was not one of those men who are forgotten as soon as their backs are turned. To be remembered is a gift in itself of vital worth to those whose business it is to lead others. John Adams had a great reputation as a lecturer, and his pupils opened their eyes, mouths, ears, at what he said that week in the lecture-hall in the great London Hospital to which he belonged. What had come to him? He was eloquent enough, but sarcastic, irate, intolerant. They hardly recognised him.

I saw Josephine again after this, but I found her very reserved and evidently disinclined to speak of what had happened. When I ventured to say a word, she stopped me at once.

"Pray, dear Miss Williamson, do not speak of it any more. I should not be happy. You see what a life it would be for my mother without me. He will forget all about it very soon."

Perhaps she was right; and yet, at John Adams' age, time is short, and new impressions are not easily made. With older people fidelity is a habit as well as a quality.

Mrs. Thomas Ellis came to see me one Sunday, on her way from church, in most gorgeous array. She looked like a sort of Catherine-wheel of satin, touched up with gold braid. She was evidently anxious to talk it all over.

"I don't at all agree with the Colonel. Bessie is behaving most ridiculously," said the lady. "What do they expect? Everybody can't be rich, and Josephine might do a great deal worse. I hope Dr. Adams will come and pay us a nice long visit at Cradlebury. I shall get the Colonel to persuade him."

"The Colonel!" said I.

"Thomas is *very* good about doing what one wishes when he is left to himself. It is such waste for dear Bessie to take so much trouble about him. But what has become of Dr. Adams? I can't hear anything of him. I believe he is gone away."

The Doctor had vanished, but he re-appeared before long—oddly enough, in Sophy King's correspondence.

## V.

Sophy King was a great favourite of mine, and her letters were always welcome when they arrived with their odd-looking stamps, whether cross keys of Rome or fierce mustachios of Italy, or Liberty with scales and outstretched arms.

Sophy was evidently very much taken with the Arnheims. Her letters were full of them. "We had a delightful drive from Grindelwald," she wrote; "as we were trotting down the road we met Fina and her father, who had come half-way to meet us. I left mamma with her maid in the carriage, and walked back with them by a pretty cross-road Fina had discovered. She looked like a little Proserpine with a great lapful of flowers which she had been gathering. She began telling me where each one of them grew and how she had found it. 'Don't you like Euphrasia?' she said, holding up a tiny flower; 'this grows in the open Alps. Do you know it is my name as well as Josephine? We call that the Shepherd's Staircase just below.' The Shepherd's Staircase consisted of a few rough steps of rock and stone, over which a soft net-work of moss and creeping bilberry had quickly spread. The girl sprang lightly from one stone to another, but Arnheim sat down to rest for a moment, when we reached the bottom. 'Isn't this a pretty place?' said Fina. 'Don't you wish we always lived here, papa, or that there were mountains in the streets?' 'The mountain-tops of cities must be in the souls of the men who live there,' said Arnheim, looking at her fondly. 'Sit down and rest, Fina; you have a long way to go yet.' 'But why do we always live in towns?' persisted Fina. 'Because I make my living by music,' said her father, 'and musicians must live in cities where there are orchestras and audiences, and where the mountains are mountains of men. Music unheard is not quite born, somehow, like something hoped for but unfulfilled. I don't think,' he added, 'that anything even in nature is much more glorious than a symphony of Beethoven's, with the pulse of a great



audience to beat time to it.' 'Listen, there is music for you, papa,' said Fina laughing, as a ludicrous loo loo loo reached us, sounding from a little chalet on the plateau below, where a valiant tourist who had ordered some gingerbeer was trumpeting to the echos and the scampering goats.

"The tourist joined our party, and came trudging along with us for company. The day was hot and sultry, and the midges were buzzing about the feet of the mountains. When we reached the valley everything was cool and silent overhead, but the valleys were alive, echoing, flowering, fructifying, and steaming with July. We all came straggling along a lane that lay between two wide chalet-besprinkled meadows; a little brook bubbled swiftly along with them; its spray fell upon the grass and flowers. The afternoon rays were dazzling and bewildering, the mists of heat rose with dull scents from the fields, fresher ether came streaming down from the torrents; we were in a state of vague worry and rapture combined, bitten by midges, dazzled by sudden streams of light, footsore, and splashing among the sparkling pools that lay in their track, but carried on by the sweet and irresistible spirit of this Alpine life. Horses' hoofs were stamped in the road, delicate flowers were starting through the fences, pretty, dirty little children, whose golden crowns of curly hair were sadly in want of burnishing, came out from their barn-like homes, like little living sheaves of Indian corn, carrying flowers and smiling innocently. An old shepherdess in spectacles was turning over the hay in front of her wooden house. Girls with babies in their arms were perched here and there on the balconies; cross lights showed the interiors and figures at work in the rooms within. The goats rang their tinkling bells, but the cows were still up in the mountains.

"Mr. Arnheim and I were tired out before we reached home; he walked along bent and heavy-footed, but Fina seemed quite revived by the sight of the village. I saw more than one person look kindly at her as she passed up the busy street, walking ahead with her flowers, followed by us two weary pedestrians. She walked lightly on, carrying her store, stray fragments from that beautiful earthly rainbow which springs up year by year, as much the offspring of the sun and rain as those arcs we all love to gaze upon. Fina has, too, sprung up since you saw her last. She has a crop of dark curly hair, a quaint irregular face with a very sweet expression; as for her eyes, they seem to sing and dance to her father's violin, they flash and shine with marvellous brightness. I think Fina's great charm is in her self-confidence, or, rather, in her confidence in others, and her trust in their sympathy. It is a curious quick mind, taking in half-a-dozen things at once; she listens to all the talking all down both sides the table; her father calls her little pitcher; she can spy out strawberries far away twinkling among the rocks, and she recognises little black dots on the mountain side as human beings and friends at a glance. Her father told me that she had such bright eyes as a baby that he christened her Euphrasia for a second name.

"When Fina appears dressed for the *table-d'hôte*, in her white dress with her amber necklace clasped round her throat, and stands there crisp, and clean, and fresh, she looks like her pretty namesake flower alive and chattering.

"We are glad of our white dresses, for it is very hot and sultry here in the valley. As I write, the dinner is over, the fountain and some distant piano are playing a duet; a sort of sleepy dream touches everything. The fountain should be boiling after the long day's burning glare, but how tranquil the water sounds to parched ears. The people of the place don't mind the heat: they go by dragging their children in little go-carts, or staggering along with hay-fields on their heads. Then come mules from the mountain, then a travelling carriage jingles up. Such a carriageful came up to the door just now; an immense and noisy English family whose heels and voices reverberated through the hotel. They were all having tea while some of the company dined at the *table-d'hôte*; brothers, sisters, big boys and little boys, an old aunt or two, nondescript cousins of various ages, two giggling girls, and a huge and good-humoured mother, who seemed to take noise as a matter of course, and who, so long as her plate was duly replenished by the attention of her children, seemed to require nothing else. When a smaller child fell under the table with a crash, she made no remark beyond looking vaguely at one of the daughters; when one of the boys gave a sudden yelp and upset the coffee-pot, this mother of Israel paused for one instant and went on with her bread and butter.

"Did you see her, papa?" said Fina, laughing; 'what a lazy mother! Why, my mother always was thinking of your things and my things. Grandmamma is more like that lady: I could imagine her letting things go. Was mamma very unhappy at home?' the girl asked suddenly, looking up into her father's face.

"No, my child," her father answered gently; 'she was very happy, and always contented, and you must be like her. It was my hasty temper that could not fit itself to her relations. But she loved them, and for that reason I feel in charity with them now. . . . Your youngest aunt is something like her, I think.'

"Not Aunt Bessie," said Fina, with a sparkle in her dark eyes.

"Aunt Bessie is the devil," said Arnheim with a wry face, notwithstanding his charity.

## VI.

'We all met again that evening at the *établissement*. Fina came with mamma and me. Arnheim was at his post, commanding his little army of violins and violoncellos. The musicians sat in a phalanx on a sort of inclosed stage, brilliantly lighted up. The dark sky overhead was lighted up too, but in a different fashion. A few little stars of cigar ends and cigarettes had fallen into the parterre. The people looked very comfortably established, sitting out in the garden drinking their

coffee, and enjoying the music and the cool of the evening. Our noisy family had secured a couple of tables by us, the mamma was installed with a special footstool. There was a cheerful drone of voices; children ran here and there; waiters were darting in and out among the crowd. They are certainly swallows among human beings, as they skim hither and thither, migrating in autumn across the Alps, vanishing for the winter, and reappearing with the tourists. One of them came flitting up with two excellent cups of chocolate for me and mamma in one hand; in the other he carried a huge tray full of cakes and ices for the family party. The musicians began to play a lovely sort of dance by Schumann; the little boys went on kicking their heels in valiant time to the music; mamma and I sat sipping our chocolate to the very sweetest cadence; Fina was too much excited for cups of any sort.

" 'There,' said she suddenly; 'that stupid cornet has played E flat instead of C sharp. He always does just in that place. Poor, poor papa!'

"Arnheim had turned in warning towards the unlucky cornet, who went on nervously blundering.

" 'It is enough to keep my father awake all night,' little Fina cried in despair; 'you don't know how easily he is made ill—quite ill.'

"After the Schumann came a pause; and the stars twinkled for a bit, —then the music began again in a different key. I do not know why Arnheim had selected one of Mendelssohn's Songs without Words—a solemn, melancholy march, too sad for the occasion, it silenced the talk.

" 'I should say that was the tune the old cow died of,' cried one of the young men at the table next ours.

"Fina gave him one look, such a look of scornful, contemptuous indignation. The youth stared, started, got up uneasily and walked away, with his hands in his pockets, whistling, and in his confusion ran up against a gentleman who was coming through the crowd, marching rather at haphazard, stumbling up against backs of chairs, and over outstretched legs and sticks.

"Fina, seeing the stranger, forgot her indignation; she too jumped up from her chair, calling out, 'Mr. Adams! Mr. Adams! were you looking for me?'

" 'Mr. Adams is a great friend of the Arnheims'. He is a doctor—in small practice, they tell me. He has made all sorts of discoveries in science; but he has never had time to earn any money. He has a lectureship at one of the great London universities. He cured Arnheim once from a dangerous illness. He is quite simple; but he impresses one—I can't tell you why.

" 'We must wait to talk till your father has finished what he has to say,' this doctor said to Fina; and he stood by her chair while Arnheim played a touching cadence, to which the whole orchestra replied with a lovely sweep of chords. Then came chair-scraping; the swallows rushed about collecting their halfpence, and the concert was over.

"I certainly grow more and more interested in the Arnheims and their

friends; even mamma, who is not enthusiastic, has taken to them. I don't know what my father will say when he joins us. Church and State has always been his particular sphere hitherto, and he is very suspicious of anything outside it. Art and science seem to be naturally opposed to Church and State, don't you think so? and as for all these kind, clever, impulsive people, they have scarcely a white neckcloth among them.

"The concert is all over at ten; and the gaslights go out, and the chairs and tables turn over on their backs and go to sleep. Arnheim came up looking very tired, but he brightened directly at the sight of his friend.

"'You here?' he said. 'I imagined you in London. How are the lectures getting on?'

"'I have been enjoying *your* lecture very much,' said the Doctor. 'I saw the concerts advertised at the station at Basel, and so I came on to find you.'

"The people scattered. Some went home; some turned into the *établissement*, which sits up later than the garden. Mamma, strange to say, had a fancy for a stroll. We walked along the avenue, and crossed the road, and the piazza, and the bridge, and got out into the open.

"High, clear, chill, with strange unresponding beauty, the moon shone upon the wide black valley; the waters of the torrent were brawling and circling in cool eddies; some pines crowded dark, and whispered mysteriously fragrant. What was that flash? Some planet changing from rainbow to rainbow. We walked a little way by the rushing stream. It was all dim, noisy, bewildering, and sleepy at once. Weeds floated on the water; the moon floated in the sky. Across the plain rose a shadowy presence—the Jungfrau—which seemed to face us in some indifferent mood of chilly life. The dew was falling heavily; and I heard Arnheim sigh.

"'Come back,' said the Doctor—it was quite a relief to hear his comfortable voice. 'It is too dark to stay out any longer.'

"Many of the windows of the hotel were lighted up still when we reached it. The porters and waiters were closing for the night. On our way we passed a ground-floor window through which we could see a peaceful interior scene: a little child asleep on a low couch, with all its hair falling upon the pillow; the night-light was shaded; a woman bent over the little one, and then came to the window and carefully drew down the blind.

"In the great *salle* the gas was still flaring. Everybody was gone, and the red velvet sofas were empty. One lady only remained in the great empty room. She was old, painted, and wrinkled; she had a frizz of flaxen tow, cheeks of chalk, eyebrows of black-lead. She was dressed in some grand satin dress, and, as we came in, was kneeling on one of the high red sofas looking at herself fixedly in the glass. I don't know what made Arnheim's friend, the Doctor, give a curious sort of snort.

"To think," he said, "of some women, and not bad women either, deliberately choosing such a life as that, and giving up everything in the whole world for it!" and then he stalked away.

But, dear Miss Williamson, it is not true. Women don't deliberately choose; their lives come to them, and they can but take them as they come."

## VII.

I went to show this letter to Josephine, for I knew it would interest her; but she had gone away with her mother for a few weeks, on a visit to Mrs. Thomas at Cradlebury, and I did not send it after her. The Colonel was to stay on with Miss Bessie in London. He had business to attend to before he went abroad. The Colonel's business was always looked upon with great respect by his family. There was not much of it; but what there was always seemed more important than anybody else's. I believe he was engrossed, among other things, in negotiations for the exchange of the old silver tea-urn for a dozen flat candlesticks, the want of which at Cradlebury he felt keenly. Mr. Ellis, the father, had been a collector of old plate, and the spoons and forks in Old Palace Square were certainly a pleasure to contemplate. Burroughes, in spite of his failings, used to rub up his silver to a bright perfection in those underground regions he affectioned. There were long slim spoons and forks with the handles all curled the wrong way, to the delight of the knowing; also the spoons were an egg-shaped and rounded oval, not pointed as ours are, and heavy and massive to wield. Early Georgian plate had certainly much of the spirit of the powdered and deliberate company for whose mouths it was intended. It did not sprawl into vulgar ornamentations; it did not beat out one solid fork into several flimsy four-pronged impossibilities; it contented itself with three handsome prongs, firmly and massively set, shining and sufficient. But whether it is better that one man should have a handsome fork all to himself, or that two men should enjoy theirs flimsy, is a difficult question.

A comico-tragedy was enacted at Mrs. Ellis's concerning this very plate; for when it came to be counted over, a certain quantity was found to be missing. What there was left was in a beautiful shining condition. But though the moth and rust had been kept at bay, not so the thieves. It was not that which was used every day that was gone, but a certain extra store, which had been fetched from the bank and confided to Burroughes in case of emergency, was found to be deficient. The old fellow's honesty was not to be doubted; he had rubbed these spoons for twenty years, and his life's energy was to be seen twinkling in manifest activity on their handles. He himself had discovered the loss, that otherwise would never have been suspected, and had staggered in, in consternation, to announce it. The police were had in, and their opinion was no doubt very valuable, but did not lead to much. The silver was already melted



down, said they; without doubt it had been stolen by somebody. Miss Ellis and the Colonel were much perturbed at the liberty which had been taken. "Few people could spare so much plate better than you," said I, by way of consolation to Miss Ellis. But to this she made no response. I left the poor lady, little thinking what a miserable experience was still in store for her.

Hoopers, who was a youth of an excitable and romantic disposition, seems to have been very much engrossed by this event in the family; and, moreover, having been lately thrilled by various accounts of robberies in the paper and elsewhere, which, in Mrs. Ellis's absence, he had time to ponder on thoroughly, thought this a good opportunity for exercising his ingenuity and venting his feeling against a lady to whom he had taken a dislike. Miss Ellis, it seems, was peacefully asleep in her bed one night, when she was awakened by an alarming apparition of a short figure swathed in a tablecloth, with a crape across its face, which exclaimed in a crowing voice—"Ho, ho, I am the robber. Your money or your life." The poor lady sprang from her bed with a scream, and in so doing fell to the ground, upsetting the night-light which always burnt at her side. The wretched boy, who had merely intended a wild practical joke, tried to rush from the room, but could not find the door. The maids came down, the Colonel came up from his bed-room on the ground floor in an Indian dressing-gown. Hoopers was caught red-handed, the police were again sent for, and not only the police. The doctor was also necessary, for Miss Ellis was hurt. Her ankle was badly sprained, and for many weeks she was confined to the sofa. For a person of her energetic temper this was no small infliction.

This absurd piece of news was all I had to send to Sophy in exchange for her faithful long letters. I think she was as glad to write as I to read. Her mother was to her an affection, a tender solicitude, but no companion to the girl. Her only sister was married and away, her father had little sympathy for the things she cared about. The girl was full of interest, emotion, kindness, sympathy, and talkativeness; she wanted a vent, some one to confide in; and her old governess on her second floor was only too glad to respond.

One more letter reached me from Sophy, still engrossed in her new friends.

"Alas! we all part to-morrow. Mamma and I go on to St. Pierre. I don't like saying good-bye. Oh, Miss Williamson, why must one always be saying good-bye? We have all been sitting out for the last time in front of the hotel, watching an odd mixture of elements upon the terrace. Russian human nature, smoking cigarettes, male and female; English human nature, simple and blousy, sitting on the benches, looking at the sky and the people underneath it; French human nature, exchanging good-natured, cheerful greetings, talkings, and laughter. Then the piano strikes up, and some of them go in and begin to dance.

Dr. Adams sat with us for a while. He was saying he could imagine a passion for nature coming late in life to people for whom all other passion was over, especially to women, and that a need for absorbing interest is part of the machinery of life, and does not end with youth. He talks as if he were an old man, but he is really quite young. He hates sitting still, and soon went off straggling down the pathway. Arnheim looked after him and said—

“‘I envy him his energy; he will make a name for himself. He has a wonderful gift for discovering work for himself, and for helping others with theirs.’

“‘He ought to be a clergyman,’ said I.

“‘Why should he be a clergyman?’ said Arnheim. ‘The religion of the strong helping the weak is the natural religion all the world over. There need be no paid clergy to teach such a simple doctrine as that. You must not forget us altogether,’ he added, when he said good-night.

“‘There is no fear of that. It has been a real happiness to me to know these good simple people, and I shall always feel as if Fina was a little niece of my own.’

“Good-bye from your ever affectionate

“SOPHY.”

Alas! the time came only too quickly for Sophy to prove the reality of her good-will. It was the last day before the summer holidays began. I had had a long day's work going from school to school, from pupil to pupil. I had been thinking of my own arrangements of Margate or Southend as a convenient change, my wildest ambition reached no farther than Calais or Boulogne. It was a lovely evening, and on my way home I sat down to rest on one of the benches in Kensington Gardens and watched the sun setting in floods of red behind the old Dutch palace. There I sat feeling a little alone perhaps, as if the shadows were creeping from afar, and might engulf me.

My friends were all away, being amused in company; Miss Ellis had been conveyed to Cradlebury with many precautions; the Colonel was abroad with a Captain, a friend of his; even my three organ-grinders had trudged off to the sea-side, no doubt; and I went homewards dull and out of spirits, little thinking what trouble some of those I most cared for were in.

Mrs. Taplow was standing at my door. “There's a telegram come for you,” she said; “a foreign telegram. I have been looking out for you.”

The telegram was from Sophy King at St. Pierre. “Arnheim dangerously ill at Interlaken. Let some one come to Fina.”

The message seemed to have been delayed, for the date was two days old.

## Rambles among Books.

### NO. I.—COUNTRY BOOKS.

A LOVE of the country is taken, I know not why, to indicate the presence of all the cardinal virtues. It is one of those outlying qualities which are not exactly meritorious, but which, for that very reason, are the more provocative of a pleasing self-complacency. People pride themselves upon it as upon habits of early rising, or of answering letters by return of post. We recognise the virtuous hero of a novel as soon as we are told that the cat instinctively creeps to his knee, and that the little child clutches his hand to stay its tottering steps. To say that we love the country is to make an indirect claim to a similar excellence. We assert a taste for sweet and innocent pleasures, and an indifference to the feverish excitements of artificial society. I, too, love the country—if such a statement can be received after such an exordium; but I confess—to be duly modest—that I love it best in books. In real life I have remarked that it is frequently damp and rheumatic, and most hated by those who know it best. Not long ago, I heard a worthy orator at a country school-treat declare to his small audience that honesty, sobriety, and industry, in their station in life, might possibly enable them to become cabdrivers in London. The precise form of the reward was suggested, I fancy, by some edifying history of an ideal cabman; but the speaker clearly knew the road to his hearers' hearts. Perhaps the realisation of this high destiny might dispel their illusions. Like poor Susan at the corner of Wood Street, they would see

Eight volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,  
And a river flow on through the vale of Cheapside.

The Swiss, who at home regards a mountain as an unmitigated nuisance, is (or once was) capable of developing sentimental yearnings for the Alps at the sound of a *ranz des vaches*. We all agree with Horace that Rome is most attractive at Tibur, and *vice versa*. It is the man who has been "long in populous cities pent," who, according to Milton, enjoys

The smell of grain or tedded grass or kine,  
Or daisy, each rural sight, each rural sound;

and the phrase is employed to illustrate the sentiments of a being whose enjoyment of paradise was certainly enhanced by a sufficiently contrasted experience.

I do not wish to pursue the good old moral saws expounded by so

many preachers and poets. I am only suggesting a possible ground of apology for one who prefers the ideal mode of rustication; who can share the worthy Johnson's love of Charing Cross, and sympathise with his pathetic remark when enticed into the Highlands by his bear-leader that it is easy "to sit at home and conceive rocks, heaths, and waterfalls." Some slight basis of experience must doubtless be provided on which to rear any imaginary fabric; and the mental opiate, which stimulates the sweetest reverie, is found in chewing the cud of past recollections. But with a good guide, one requires small external aid. Though a cockney in grain, I love to lean upon the farmyard gate; to hear Mrs. Poyser give a bit of her mind to the squire; to be lulled into a placid doze by the humming of Dorlecote Mill; to sit down in Dandie Dimont's parlour, and bestow crumbs from his groaning table upon three generations of Peppers and Mustards; or to drop into the kitchen of a good old country inn and to smoke a pipe with Tom Jones or listen to the simple-minded philosophy of Parson Adams. When I lift my eyes to realities, I can dimly descry across the street a vision of my neighbour behind his looking-glass adjusting the parting of his back hair, and achieving triumphs with his white tie calculated to excite the envy of a Brummell. It is pleasant to take down one of the magicians of the shelf, to annihilate my neighbour and his evening parties, and to wander off through quiet country lanes into some sleepy hollow of the past.

Who are the most potent weavers of that delightful magic? Clearly, in the first place, those who have been themselves in contact with rural sights and sounds. The echo of an echo loses all sharpness of definition; our guide may save us the trouble of stumbling through farmyards and across ploughed fields, but he must have gone through it himself till his very voice has a twang of the true country accent. Milton, as Mr. Pattison has lately told us, "saw nature through books," and is therefore no trustworthy guide. We feel that he has got a Theocritus in his pocket; that he is using the country to refresh his memories of Spenser or Chaucer, or Virgil; and, instead of forgetting the existence of books in his company, we shall be painfully abashed if we miss some obvious allusion or fail to identify the passages upon which he has moulded his own descriptions. And, indeed, to put it broadly, the poets are hardly to be trusted in this matter, however fresh and spontaneous may be their song. They don't want to offer us a formal sermon, unless "they" means Wordsworth; but they have not the less got their little moral to insinuate. Shelley's skylark and Keats's nightingale are equally determined that we shall indulge in meditations about life and death and the mysterious meaning of the universe. That is just what, on these occasions, we want to forget; we want the bird's song, not the emotions which it excites in our abnormally sensitive natures. I can never read without fresh admiration Mr. Arnold's *Gipsy Scholar*, but in this sense that delightful person is a typical offender. I put myself, at Mr. Arnold's

request, in the corner of the high half-reaped field; I see the poppies peeping through the green roots and yellowing stems of the corn; I lazily watch the scholar with "his hat of antique shape," roaming the country side, and becoming the living centre of one bit of true old-fashioned rustic scenery after another; and I feel myself half persuaded to be a gipsy. But then, before I know how or why, I find that I am to be worrying myself about the strange disease of modern life; about "our brains o'ertaxed and palsied hearts," and so forth; and instead of being lulled into a delicious dream, I have somehow been entrapped into a meditation upon my incapacity for dreaming. And more or less, this is the fashion of all poets. You can never be sure that they will let you have your dream out quietly. They must always be bothering you about the state of their souls; and, to say the truth, when they try to be simply descriptive, they are for the most part intolerably dull.

Your poet, of course, is bound to be an interpreter of nature; and nature, for the present purpose, must be regarded as simply a nuisance. The poet, by his own account, is condescending to find words for the inarticulate voices of sea and sky and mountain. In reality, nature is nothing but the sounding-board which is to give effect to his own valuable observations. It is a general, but safe rule that whenever you come across the phrase "laws of nature" in an article—especially if it is by a profound philosopher—you may expect a sophistry; and it is still more certain that when you come across nature in a poem you should prepare to receive a sermon. It does not in the least follow that it will be a bad one. It may be exquisite, graceful, edifying, and sublime; but, as a sermon, the more effective the less favourable to the reverie which one desires to cultivate. Nor, be it observed, does it matter whether the prophet be more or less openly and unblushingly didactic. A good many hard things have been said about poor Wordsworth for his delight in sermonising; and though I love Wordsworth with all my heart, I certainly cannot deny that he is capable of becoming a portentous weariness to the flesh. But, for this purpose, Wordsworth is no better and no worse than Byron or Shelley, or Keats or Rousseau, or any of the dealers in praises of *Weltschmerz*, or mental dyspepsia. Mr. Ruskin has lately told us that in his opinion ninety-nine things out of a hundred are not what they should be, but the very opposite of what they should be. And therefore he sympathises less with Wordsworth than with Byron and Rousseau, and other distinguished representatives of the same agreeable creed. From the present point of view the question is irrelevant. I wish to be for the nonce a poet of nature, not a philosopher, either with a healthy or a disturbed liver, delivering a judicial opinion about nature as a whole or declaring whether I regard it as representing a satisfactory or a thoroughly uncomfortable system. I condemn neither opinion; I will not pronounce Wordsworth's complacency to be simply the glow thrown from his comfortable domestic hearth upon the outside darkness; or Byron's wrath against mankind to be simply



the crying of a spoilt child with a digestion ruined by sweetmeats. I do not want to think about it. Preaching, good or bad, from the angelic or diabolical point of view, cunningly hidden away in delicate artistic forms, or dashed ostentatiously in one's face in a shower of moral platitudes, is equally out of place. And, therefore, for the time, I would choose for my guide to the Alps some gentle enthusiast in *Peaks and Passes*, who tells me in his admirably matter-of-fact spirit, what he had for lunch and how many steps he had to cut in the *mur de la côte*, and catalogues the mountains which he could see as calmly as if he were repeating a schoolboy lesson in geography. I eschew the meditations of Obermann, and do not care in the least whether he got into a more or less maudlin frame of mind about things in general as contemplated from the Col de Janan. I shrink even from the admirable descriptions of Alpine scenery in the *Modern Painters*, lest I should be launched unawares into ethical or æsthetical speculation. "A plague of both your houses!" I wish to court entire absence of thought—not even to talk to a graceful gipsy scholar, troubled with aspirations for mysterious knowledge; but rather to the genuine article, such as the excellent Bamfield Moore Carew, who took to be a gipsy in earnest, and was content to be a thorough loafer, not even a Bohemian in conscious revolt against society, but simply outside of the whole social framework, and accepting his position with as little reflection as some wild animal in a congenial country.

Some kind philosopher professes to put my thoughts into correct phraseology by saying that for such a purpose I require thoroughly "objective" treatment. I must, however, reject his suggestions, not only because "objective" and "subjective" are vile phrases, used for the most part to cover indolence and ambiguity of thought, but also because, if I understand the word rightly, it describes what I do not desire. The only thoroughly objective works with which I am acquainted are those of which Bradshaw's Railway Guide is an accepted type. There are occasions, I will admit, in which such literature is the best help to the imagination. When I read in prosaic black and white that by leaving Euston Square at 10 A.M. I shall reach Windermere at 5.40 P.M., it sometimes helps me to perform an imaginary journey to the lakes even better than a study of Wordsworth's poems. It seems to give a fixed point round which old fancies and memories can crystallise; to supply a useful guarantee that Grasmere and Rydal do in sober earnest belong to the world of realities, and are not mere parts of the decaying phantasmagoria of memory. And I was much pleased the other day to find a complimentary reference in a contemporary essayist to a lively work called, I believe, the *Shepherd's Guide*, which once beguiled a leisure hour in a lonely inn, and which simply records the distinctive marks put upon the sheep of the district. The sheep, as it proved, was not a mere poetical figment in an idyll, but a real tangible animal, with wool capable of being tarred and ruddled, and eating real grass in real fells and accessible

mountain dales. In our childhood, when any old broomstick will serve as well as the wondrous horse of brass

On which the Tartar king did ride,

in the days when a cylinder with four pegs is as good a steed as the finest animal in the Elgin marbles, and when a puddle swarming with tadpoles or a streamlet haunted by water-rats is as full of romance as a jungle full of tigers, the barest catalogue of facts is the most effective. A child is deliciously excited by Robinson Crusoe because De Foe is content to give the naked scaffolding of direct narrative, and leaves his reader to supply the sentiment and romance at pleasure. Who does not fear, on returning to the books which delighted his childhood, that all the fairy-gold should have turned to dead leaves? I remember a story told in some forgotten book of travels, which haunted my dreams, and still strikes me as terribly impressive. I see a traveller benighted by some accident in a nullah where a tiger has already supped upon his companion, and listening to mysterious sounds, as of fiendish laughter, which he is afterwards cruel enough to explain away by some rationalising theory as to gases. How or why the traveller got into or emerged from the scrape, I know not; but some vague association of ferocious wild beasts and wood-demons in ghastly and haunted solitudes, has ever since been excited in me by the mention of a nullah. It is as redolent of awful mysteries as the chasm in *Kubla Khan*. And it is painful to reflect that a nullah may be a commonplace phenomenon in real life; and that the anecdote might possibly affect me no more, could I now read it for the first time, than one of the tremendous adventures recorded by Mr. Kingston or Captain Mayne Reid.

As we become less capable of supplying the magic for ourselves, we require it from our author. He must have the art—the less conscious the better—of placing us at his own point of view. He should, if possible, be something of a “humourist,” in the old-fashioned sense of the word; not the man who compounds oddities, but the man who is an oddity; the slave, not the master, of his own eccentricities; one absolutely unconscious that the strange twist in his mental vision is not shared by mankind, and capable, therefore, of presenting the fancies dictated by his idiosyncrasy as if they corresponded to obvious and generally recognised realities; and of propounding some quaint and utterly preposterous theory, as though it were a plain deduction from undeniable truths. The modern humourist is the old humourist *plus* a consciousness of his own eccentricity, and the old humourist is the modern humourist *minus* that consciousness. The order of his ideas should not (as philosophers would have it) be identical with the order of things, but be determined by odd arbitrary freaks of purely personal association.

This is the kind of originality which we specially demand from an efficient guide to the country; for the country means a region where men have not been ground into the monotony by the friction of our social

mill. The secret of his charm lies in the clearness with which he brings before us some quaint, old-fashioned type of existence. He must know and care as little for what passes in the great world of cities and parliaments as the family of Tullivers and Dodsons. His horizon should be limited by the nearest country town, and his politics confined to the disputes between the parson and the Dissenting minister. He should have thoroughly absorbed the characteristic prejudices of the little society in which he lives, till he is unaware that it could ever enter into any one's head to doubt their absolute truth. He should have a share of the peculiarity which is often so pathetic in children—the unhesitating conviction that some little family arrangement is a part of the eternal and immutable system of things, and be as much surprised at discovering an irreverent world outside as the child at the discovery that there are persons who do not consider his papa to be omniscient. That is the temper of mind which should characterise your genuine rustic. As a rule, of course, it condemns him to silence. He has no more reason for supposing that some quaint peculiarity of his little circle will be interesting to the outside world than a frog for imagining that a natural philosopher would be interested by the statement that he was once a tadpole. He takes it for granted that we have all been tadpoles. In the queer, outlying corners of the world where the father goes to bed and is nursed upon the birth of a child (a system which has its attractive side to some persons of that persuasion), the singular custom is so much a matter of course that a village historian would not think of mentioning it. The man is only induced to exhibit his humour to the world when, by some happy piece of fortune, he has started a hobby not sufficiently appreciated by his neighbours. Then it may be that he becomes a prophet, and in his anxiety to recommend his own pet fancy, unconsciously illustrates also the interesting social stratum in which it sprung to life. The hobby, indeed, is too often unattractive. When a self-taught philosopher airs some pet crotchet, and proves, for example, that the legitimate descendants of the lost tribes are to be found amongst the Ojibbeways, he doubtless throws a singular light upon the intellectual peculiarities of his district. But he illustrates chiefly the melancholy truth that a half-taught philosopher may be as dry and as barren as the one who has been smoke-dried according to all the rules of art in the most learned academy of Europe.

There are a few familiar books in which a happy combination of circumstances has provided us with a true country idyll, fresh and racy from the soil, not consciously constructed by the most skilful artistic hand. Two of them have a kind of acknowledged pre-eminence in their own department. The man is not to be envied who has not in his boyhood fallen in love with Izaak Walton and White of Selborne. The boy, indeed, is happily untroubled as to the true source of the charm. He pores over the *Compleat Angler* with the impression that he will gain some hints for beguiling, if not the wily carp, who is accounted the water-fox, at least

the innocent roach, who "is accounted the water-sheep for his simplicity or foolishness." His mouth waters as he reads the directions for converting the pike—that compound of mud and needles—into "a dish of meat too good for any but anglers or very honest men,"—a transformation which, if authentic, is little less than miraculous. He does not ask what is the secret of the charm of the book even for those to whom fishing is an abomination—a charm which induced even the arch-cockney Dr. Johnson, in spite of his famous definition of angling, to prompt the republication of this angler's bible. It is only as he grows older, and has plodded through other sporting literature, that he can at all explain why the old gentleman's gossip is so fascinating. Walton; undoubtedly, is everywhere charming for his pure simple English, and the unostentatious vein of natural piety which everywhere lies just beneath the surface of his writing. Now and then, however, in reading the *Lives*, we cannot quite avoid a sense that this excellent tradesman has just a touch of the unctuous about him. He is given—it is a fault from which hagiographers can scarcely be free—to using the rose-colour a little too freely. He holds towards his heroes the relation of a sentimental churchwarden to a revered parish parson. We fancy that the eyes of the preacher would turn instinctively to Walton's seat when he wished to catch an admiring glance from an upturned face, and to assure himself that he was touching the "sacred fount of sympathetic tears." We imagine Walton lingering near the porch to submit a deferential compliment as to the "florid and seraphical" discourse to which he has been listening, and scarcely raising his glance above the clerical shoe-buckles. A portrait taken from this point of view is apt to be rather unsatisfactory. Yet, in describing the "sweet humility" of a George Herbert or of the saintly Mr. Farrer, the tone is at least in keeping, and is consistent even with an occasional gleam of humour, as in the account of poor Hooker, tending sheep and rocking the cradle under stringent feminine supremacy. It is less satisfactory when we ask Walton to throw some light upon the curiously enigmatic character of Donne, with its strange element of morbid gloom, and masculine passion, and subtle and intense intellect. Donne married the woman he loved in spite of her father and to the injury of his own fortunes. "His marriage," however, observes the biographer, "was the remarkable error of his life; an error which, though he had a wit able and very apt to maintain paradoxes, yet he was very far from justifying it." From our point of view, the only error was in the desire to justify an action of which he should have been proud. We must make allowance for the difference in Walton's views of domestic authority; but we feel that his prejudice disqualifies him from fairly estimating a character of great intrinsic force. A portrait of Donne cannot be adequately brought within the lines accepted by the writer of orthodox and edifying tracts.

In spite of this little failing, this rather massive subservience to the respectabilities, the *Lives* form a delightful book; but we get the genuine

Walton at full length in his *Angler*. It was first published in dark days; when the biographer might be glad that his pious heroes had been taken from the sight of the coming evil; when the scattered survivors of his favourite school of divines and poets were turned out of their well-beloved colleges and parsonages, hiding in dark corners or plotting with the melancholy band of exiles in France and Holland; when Walton, instead of listening to the sound and witty discourses of Donne, would find the pulpit of his parish church profaned by some fanatical Puritan, expounding the Westminster Confession in place of the Thirty-nine Articles. The good Walton found consolation in the almost religious pursuit of his hobby. He fortified himself with the authority of such admirable and orthodox anglers as Sir Henry Wotton and Dr. Nowel, Dean of St. Paul's. Dr. Nowel had, "like an honest angler, made that good, plain, unperplexed Catechism which is printed with our good old service-book:" for an angler, it seems, is most likely to know that the road to heaven is not through "hard questions." The Dean died at the age of ninety-five, in perfect possession of his faculties; and 'tis said that angling and temperance were great causes of those blessings. Evidently Walton had somehow taken for granted that there is an inherent harmony between angling and true religion, which of course for him implies the Anglican religion. He does not trust himself in the evil times to grumble openly, or to indulge in more than an occasional oblique reference to the dealers in hard questions and metaphysical dogmatism. He takes his rod, leaves the populous city behind him, and makes a day's march to the banks of the quiet Lea, where he can meet a like-minded friend or two; sit in the sanded parlour of the country inn, and listen to the milkmaid singing that "smooth song made by Kit Marlow, now at least fifty years ago," before English fields had been drenched with the blood of Roundheads and Cavaliers; or lie under a tree, watching his float till the shower had passed, and then calling to mind what "holy Mr. Herbert says of such days and flowers as these." Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright!—but everybody has learnt to share Walton's admiration, and the quotation would now be superfluous. It is nowhere so effective as with Walton's illustrations. We need not, indeed, remember the background of storm to enjoy the quiet sunshine and showers on the soft English landscape, which Walton painted so lovingly. The fact that he was living in the midst of a turmoil, in which the objects of his special idolatry had been so ruthlessly crushed and scattered, may help to explain the intense relish for the peaceful river-side life. His rod was the magic wand to interpose a soft idyllic mist between his eyes and such scenes as were visible at times from the windows of Whitehall. He loved his paradise the better because it was an escape from a pandemonium. But whatever the cause of his enthusiasm, its sincerity and intensity is the main cause of his attractiveness. Many poets of Walton's time loved the country as well as he; and showed it in some of the delicate lyrics which find an appropriate



setting in his pages. But we have to infer their exquisite appreciation of country sights and sounds from such brief utterances, or from passing allusions in dramatic scenes. Nobody can doubt that Shakspeare loved daffodils, or a bank of wild thyme, or violets, as keenly as Wordsworth. When he happens to mention them, his voice trembles with fine emotion. But none of the poets of the time dared to make a passion for the country the main theme of their more pretentious song. They thought it necessary to idealise and transmute; to substitute an indefinite Arcadia for plain English fields, and to populate it with piping swains and nymphs, Corydons and Amorets and Phyllises. Poor Hodge or Cis were only allowed to appear when they were minded to indulge in a little broad comedy. The coarse rustics had to be washed and combed before they could present themselves before an aristocratic audience; and plain English hills and rivers to be provided with tutelary gods and goddesses, fitted for the gorgeous pageantry of a country masque. Far be it from me—with the fear of æsthetic critics before my eyes—to say that very beautiful poems might not be produced under these conditions. It is proper, as I am aware, to admire Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, and to speak reverently of Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, and Ben Jonson's *Sad Shepherd*. I only venture to suggest here that such work is *caviare* to the multitude; that it requires a fine literary sense, a happy superiority to dull realistic suggestion, and a power of accepting the conventional conditions which the artist has to accept for his guidance. Possibly I may go so far as to hint without offence that the necessity of using this artificial apparatus was not in itself an advantage. A great master of harmony, with a mind overflowing with majestic imagery, might achieve such triumphs as *Comus* and *Lycidas*, in which even the Arcadian pipe is made to utter the true organ-tones. We forgive any incongruities or artificialities when they are lost in such a blaze of poetry. The atmosphere of Arcadia was not as yet sickly enough to asphyxiate a Milton; but it was ceasing to be wholesome; and the weaker singers who imbibed it suffered under distinct attacks of drowsiness.

Walton's good sense, or his humility, or perhaps the simple ardour of his devotion to his hobby, encouraged him to deal in realities. He gave the genuine sentiment which his contemporaries would only give indirectly, transfigured and bedizened with due ornaments of classic or romantic pattern. There is just a faint touch of unreality—a barely perceptible flavour of the sentimental about his personages; but only enough to give a permissible touch of pastoral idealism. Walton is painting directly from the life. The "honest alehouse," where he finds "a cleanly room, lavender in the windows, and twenty ballads stuck about the wall," was standing then on the banks of the Lea, as in quiet country nooks, here and there, occasional representatives of the true angler's rest are still to be found, not entirely corrupted by the modern tourist. The good man is far too much in earnest to be aiming at literary ornament; he is a genuine simple-minded enthusiast, revealing his kindly nature by

a thousand unconscious touches. The common objection is a misunderstanding. Everybody quotes the phrase about using the frog "as though you loved him;" and it is the more piquant as following one of his characteristically pious remarks. The frog's mouth, he tells, grows up for six months, and he lives for six months without eating, "sustained, none but He whose name is Wonderful knows how." He reverently admires the care taken of the frog by Providence, without drawing any more inference for his own conduct than if he were a modern physiologist. It is just this absolute unconsciousness which makes his love of the sport attractive. He has never looked at it from the frog's point of view. Your modern angler has to excuse himself by some scientific hypothesis as to feeling in the lower animals, and thereby betrays certain qualms of conscience which had not yet come to light in Walton's day. He is no more cruel than a schoolboy, "ere he grows to pity." He is simply discharging his functions as a part of nature, like the pike or the frog; and convinced, at the very bottom of his heart, that the angler represents the most eminent type of enjoyment, and should be the humble inheritor of the virtues of the fishers of Galilee. The gentlest and most pious thoughts come naturally into his mind whilst his worm is wriggling on his hook to entice the luckless trout. It is particularly pleasant to notice the quotations, which give a certain air of learning to his book. We see that the love of angling had become so ingrained in his mind as to direct his reading as well as to provide him with amusement. We fancy him poring on winter evenings over the pages of Aldrovandus and Gesner and Pliny and Topsell's histories of serpents and four-footed beasts, and humbly accepting the teaching of more learned men, who had recorded so many strange facts unobserved by the simple angler. He produces a couple of bishops, Dubravius and Thurso, as eye-witnesses, to testify to a marvellous anecdote of a frog jumping upon a pike's head and tearing out his eyes, after "expressing malice or anger by swollen cheeks and staring eyes." Even Walton cannot forbear a quiet smile at this quaint narrative. But he is ready to believe, in all seriousness, that eels, "like some kinds of bees and wasps," are bred out of dew, and to confirm it by the parallel case of young goslings bred by the sun "from the rotten planks of an old ship and hatched up trees." Science was not a dry museum of hard facts, but a quaint storehouse of semi-mythical curiosities; and therefore excellently fitted to fill spare hours, when he could not meditatively indulge in "the contemplative man's recreation." Walton found some queer texts for his pious meditations, and his pursuit is not without its drawbacks. But his quaintness only adds a zest to our enjoyment of his book; and we are content to fall in with his humour, and to believe for the nonce that the love of a sport which so fascinates this simple, kindly, reverent nature must be, as he takes for granted, the very crowning grace of a character moulded on the principles of sound Christian philosophy. Angling becomes synonymous with purity of mind and simplicity of character.

Mr. Lowell, in one of the most charming essays ever written about a garden, takes his text from White of Selborne, and admirably explains the charm of that worthy representative of the Waltonian spirit. "It is good for us now and then," says Mr. Lowell, "to converse in a world like Mr. White's, where man is the least important of animals;" to find one's whole world in a garden, beyond the reach of wars and rumours of wars. White does not give a thought to the little troubles which were disturbing the souls of Burke and George III. The "natural term of a hog's life has more interest for him than that of an empire;" he does not trouble his head about diplomatic complications whilst he is discovering that the odd tumbling of rooks in the air is caused by their turning over to scratch themselves with one claw. The great events of his life are his making acquaintance with a stilted plover, or his long—for it was protracted over ten years—and finally triumphant passion for "an old family tortoise." White of Selborne is clearly not the ideal parson of George Herbert's time; nor the parson of our own day—a poor atom whirled about in the distracting eddies of two or three conflicting movements. He is merely a good, kindly, domestic gentleman, on friendly terms with the squire and the gamekeeper, and ready for a chat with the rude forefathers of the hamlet. His horizon, natural and unnatural, is bounded by the soft round hills and the rich hangers of his beloved Hampshire country. There is something specially characteristic in his taste for scenery. Though "I have now travelled the Sussex Downs upwards of thirty years," he says, "I still investigate that chain of majestic mountains with fresh admiration year by year;" and he calls "Mr. Ray" to witness that there is nothing finer in any part of Europe. "For my own part," he says, "I think there is somewhat peculiarly sweet and amusing in the shapely figured aspects of chalk hills in preference to those of stone, which are rugged, broken, abrupt, and shapeless." I, for my part, agree with Mr. White—so long, at least, as I am reading his book. The Downs have a singular charm in the exquisite play of long, gracefully undulating lines which bound their gentle edges. If not a "majestic range of mountains," as judged by an Alpine standard, there is no want of true sublimity in their springing curves, especially when harmonised by the lights and shadows under cloud-masses driving before a broad south-westerly gale; and when you reach the edge of a great down, and suddenly look down into one of the little hollows where a village with a grey church tower and a grove of noble elms nestles amidst the fold of the hills, you fancy that in such places of refuge there must still be relics of the quiet domesticities enjoyed by Gilbert White. Here, one fancies, it must be good to live; to discharge, at an easy rate, all the demands of a society which is but a large family, and find ample excitement in studying the rambles of a tortoise, forming intimacies with moles, crickets, and field-mice, and bats, and brown owls, and watching the swifts and the night-

jars wheeling round the old church tower, or hunting flies at the edge of the wood in the quiet summer evening.

In rambling through the lanes sacred to the memory of White, you may (in fancy, at least) meet another figure not at first sight quite in harmony with the clerical Mr. White. He is a stalwart, broad-chested man in the farmer's dress, even ostentatiously representing the old British yeoman brought up on beer and beef, and with a certain touch of pugnacity suggestive of the retired prize-fighter. He stops his horse to chat with a labourer breaking stones by the roadside, and informs the gaping rustic that wages are made bad and food dear by the diabolical machinations of the Tories, and the fundholders, and the boroughmongers, who are draining away all the fatness of the land to nourish the portentous "wen" called London. He leaves the man to meditate on this suggestion, and jogs off to the nearest country town, where he will meet the farmers at their ordinary, and deliver a ranting radical address. The squire or the parson who recognises William Cobbett in this sturdy traveller, will mutter a hearty objurgation, and wish that the disturber of rustic peace could make a closer acquaintance with the neighbouring horsepond. Possibly most readers who hear his name have vaguely set down Cobbett as one of the demagogues of the anti-reforming days, and remember little more than the fact that he dabbled in some rather questionable squabbles, and brought back Tom Paine's bones from America. But it is worth while to read Cobbett, and especially the *Rural Rides*, not only to enjoy his fine homespun English, but to learn to know the man a little better. Whatever the deserts or demerits of Cobbett as a political agitator, the true man was fully as much allied to modern Young England and the later type of conservatism as to the modern radical. He hated the Scotch "feelosophers"—as he calls them—Parson Malthus, the political communists, the Manchester men, the men who would break up the old social system of the country, at the bottom of his heart; and, whatever might be his superficial alliances, he loved the old quiet country life when Englishmen were burly, independent yeomen, each equal to three frog-eating Frenchmen. He remembered the relics of the system in the days of his youth; he thought that it had begun to decay at the time of the Reformation, when grasping landlords and unprincipled statesmen had stolen Church property on pretence of religion; but ever since, the growth of manufactures, and corruption, and stockjobbing had been unpopulating the country to swell the towns, and broken up the old, wholesome, friendly, English life. That is the text on which he is always dilating with genuine enthusiasm, and the belief, true or false, gives a pleasant flavour to his intense relish for true country scenery.

He looks at things, it is true, from the point of view of a farmer, not of a landscape-painter or a lover of the picturesque. He raves against that "accursed hill" Hindhead; he swears that he will not go over it; and he tells us very amusingly how, in spite of himself, he found himself

on the very "tip top" of it, in a pelting rain, owing to an incompetent guide. But he loves the woodlands and the downs, and bursts into vivid enthusiasm at fine points of view. He is specially ecstatic in White's country. "On we trotted," he says, "up this pretty green lane, and, indeed, we had been coming gently and gradually up-hill for a good while. The lane was between high banks, and pretty high stuff growing on the banks, so that we could see no distance from us, and could receive not the smallest hint of what was so near at hand. The lane had a little turn towards the end, so that we came, all in a moment, at the very edge of the hanger; and never in my life was I so surprised and delighted! I pulled up my horse, and sat and looked. It was like looking from the top of a castle down into the sea, except that the valley was land and not water. I looked at my servant to see what effect this unexpected sight had upon him. His surprise was as great as mine, though he had been bred amongst the North Hampshire hills. Those who have so strenuously dwelt on the dirt and dangers of this road have said not a word about the beauties, the matchless beauties, of the scenery." And Cobbett goes on to describe the charms of the view over Selborne, and to fancy what it will be "when trees, and hangers, and hedges are in leaf, the corn waving, the meadows bright, and the hops upon the poles," in language which is not after the modern style of word-painting, but excites a contagious enthusiasm by its freshness and sincerity. He is equally enthusiastic soon afterwards at the sight of Avington Park and a lake swarming with wild fowl; and complains of the folly of modern rapid travelling. "In any sort of carriage you cannot get into the *real country places*. To travel in stage-coaches is to be hurried along by force in a box with an air-hole in it, and constantly exposed to broken limbs, the danger being much greater than that of shipboard, and the noise much more disagreeable, while the company is frequently not a great deal more to one's liking." What would Cobbett have said to a railway? And what has become of the old farmhouse on the banks of the Mole, once the home of "plain manners and plentiful living," with "oak clothes-chests, oak bedsteads, oak chests of drawers, and oak tables to eat on, long, strong, and well supplied with joint stools?" Now, he sighs, there is a "*parlour!* aye, and a *carpet* and *bell-pull*, too! and a mahogany table, and the fine chairs, and the fine glass, and all as bare-faced upstart as any stock-jobber in the kingdom can boast of!" Probably the farmhouse has followed the furniture, and, meanwhile, what has become of the fine old British hospitality when the farmer and his lads and lasses dined at one table, and a solid Englishman did not squeeze money out of his men's wages to surround himself with trumpery finery?

To say the truth, Cobbett's fine flow of invective is a little too exuberant, and overlays too deeply the picturesque touches of scenery and the occasional bits of autobiography which recall his boyish experience of the old country life. It would be idle to inquire how far



his vision of the old English country had any foundation in fact. Our hills and fields may be as lovely as ever; and there is still ample room for the lovers of "nature" in Scotch moors and lochs, or even amongst the English fells, or among the storm-beaten cliffs of Devon and Cornwall. But nature, as I have said, is not the country. We are not in search of the scenery which appears now as it appeared in the remote days when painted savages managed to raise a granite block upon its supports for the amusement of future antiquarians. We want the country which bears the impress of some characteristic social growth; which has been moulded by its inhabitants as the inhabitants by it, till one is as much adapted to the other as the lichen to the rock on which it grows. How bleak and comfortless a really natural country may be is apparent to the readers of Thoreau. He had all the will to become a part of nature, and to shake himself free from the various trammels of civilised life, and he had no small share of the necessary qualifications; but one cannot read his account of his life by Walden pond without a shivering sense of discomfort. He is not really acclimatised; so far from being a true child of nature, he is a man of theories, a product of the social state against which he tries to revolt. He does not so much relish the wilderness as to go out into the wilderness in order to rebuke his contemporaries. There is something harsh about him and his surroundings, and he affords an unconscious proof that something more is necessary for the civilised man who would become a true man of the woods than simply to strip off his clothes. He has got tolerably free from tailors; but he still lives in the intellectual atmosphere of Cambridge debating-rooms.

To find a life really in harmony with a rustic environment, we must not go to raw settlements where man is still fighting with the outside world, but to some region where a reconciliation has been worked out by an experience of centuries. And amidst all the restlessness of modern improvers we may still find a few regions where the old genius has not been quite exorcised. Here and there, in country lanes, and on the edge of unenclosed commons, we may still meet the gipsy—the type of a race adapted to live in the interstices of civilisation, having something of the indefinable grace of all wild animals, and yet free from the absolute savagery of the genuine wilderness. To mention gipsies is to think of Mr. Borrow; and I always wonder that the author of the *Bible in Spain* and *Lavengro* is not more popular. Certainly, I have found no more delightful guide to the charming nooks and corners of rural England. I would give a good deal to identify that remarkable dingle in which he met so singular a collection of characters. Does it really exist, I wonder, anywhere on this island? or did it ever exist? and, if so, has it become a railway-station, and what has become of Isopel Berners and "Blazing Bosville, the flaming Tinman?" His very name is as good as a poem, and the battle in which Mr. Borrow floored the Tinman by that happy left-handed blow is, to my mind, more delightful than the fight in *Tom Brown*, or that in which Dobbin acted as the champion of

Osborne. Mr. Borrow is a "humourist" of the first water. He lives in a world of his own—a queer world with laws peculiar to itself, and yet one which has all manner of odd and unexpected points of contact with the prosaic world of daily experience. Mr. Borrow's Bohemianism is no revolt against the established order. He does not invoke nature or fly to the hedges because society is corrupt or the world unsatisfying, or because he has some kind of new patent theory of life to work out. He cares nothing for such fancies. On the contrary, he is a staunch conservative, full of good old-fashioned prejudices. He seems to be a case of the strange re-appearance of an ancestral instinct under altered circumstances. Some of his forefathers must have been gipsies by temperament if not by race; and the impulses due to that strain have got themselves blended with the characteristics of the average Englishman. The result is a strange and yet, in a way, harmonious and original type, which made the *Bible in Spain* a puzzle to the average reader. The name suggested a work of the edifying class. Here was a good respectable emissary of the Bible Society going to convert four papists by a distribution of the Scriptures. He has returned to write a long tract setting forth the difficulties of his enterprise, and the stiff-neckedness of the Spanish people. The luckless reader who took up the book on that understanding was destined to a strange disappointment. True, Mr. Borrow appeared to take his enterprise quite seriously, indulges in the proper reflections, and gets into the regulation difficulty involving an appeal to the British minister. But it soon appears that his Protestant zeal is somehow mixed up with a passion for strange wanderings in the queerest of company. To him Spain is not the land of staunch Catholicism, or of Cervantes, or of Velasquez, and still less a country of historic or political interest. Its attraction is in the picturesque outcasts who find ample roaming-ground in its wilder regions. He regards them, it is true, as occasional subjects for a little proselytism. He tells us how he once delivered a moving address to the gipsies in their own language to his most promising congregation. When he had finished, he looked up and found himself the centre of all eyes, each pair contorted by a hideous squint, rivalling each other in frightfulness; and the performance, which he seems to have thoroughly appreciated, pretty well expressed the gipsy view of his missionary enterprise. But they delighted to welcome him in his other character as one of themselves, and yet as dropping amongst them from the hostile world outside. And, certainly, no one not thoroughly at home with gipsy ways, gipsy modes of thought, to whom it comes quite naturally to put up in a den of cutthroats, or to enter the field of his missionary enterprise in company with a professional brigand travelling on business, could have given us so singular a glimpse of the most picturesque elements of a strange country. Your respectable compiler of handbooks might travel for years in the same districts all unconscious that passing vagabonds were so fertile in romance. The freemasonry which exists

amongst the class lying outside the pale of respectability enables Mr. Borrow to fall in with adventures full of mysterious fascination. He passes through forests at night and his horse suddenly stops and trembles, whilst he hears heavy footsteps and rustling branches, and some heavy body is apparently dragged across the road by panting but invisible bearers. He enters a shadowy pass, and is met by a man with a face streaming with blood, who implores him not to go forwards into the hands of a band of robbers; and Mr. Borrow is too sleepy and indifferent to stop, and jogs on in safety without meeting the knife which he half expected. "It was not so written," he says, with the genuine fatalism of your hand-to-mouth Bohemian. He crosses a wild moor with a half-witted guide, who suddenly deserts him at a little tavern. After a wild gallop on a pony, apparently half-witted also, he at last rejoins the guide resting by a fountain. This gentleman condescends to explain that he is in the habit of bolting after a couple of glasses, and never stops till he comes to running water. The congenial pair lose themselves at night-fall, and the guide observes that if they should meet the *Estadéa*, which are spirits of the dead riding with candles in their hands—a phenomenon happily rare in this region—he shall "run and run till he drowns himself in the sea, somewhere near Muros." The *Estadéa* do not appear, but Mr. Borrow and his guide come near being hanged as Don Carlos and a nephew, escaping only by the help of a sailor who knows the English words knife and fork, and can therefore testify to Mr. Barrow's nationality; and is finally liberated by an official who is a devoted student of Jeremy Bentham. The queer stumbling upon a name redolent of every-day British life, throws the surrounding oddity into quaint relief. But Mr. Borrow encounters more mysterious characters. There is the wondrous Abarbenelt, whom he meets riding by night, and with whom he soon becomes hand and glove. Abarbenelt is a huge figure in a broad-brimmed hat, who stares at him in the moonlight with deep calm eyes, and still revisits him in dreams. He has two wives and a hidden treasure of old coins, and when the gates of his house are locked, and the big dogs loose in the court, he dines off ancient plate made before the discovery of America. There are many of his race amongst the priesthood, and even an Archbishop, who died in great renown for sanctity, had come by night to kiss his father's hand. Nor can any reader forget the singular history of Benedict Mol, the wandering Swiss, who turns up now and then in the course of his search for the hidden treasure at Compostella. Men who live in strange company learn the advantage of not asking questions, or following out delicate inquiries; and these singular figures are the more attractive because they come and go, half-revealing themselves for a moment, and then vanishing into outside mystery; as the narrator himself sometimes merges into the regions of absolute commonplace, and then dives down below the surface into the remotest recesses of the social labyrinth.

In Spain there may be room for such wild adventures. In the trim,

orderly, English country we might fancy they had gone out with the fairies. And yet Mr. Borrow meets a decayed pedlar in Spain who seems to echo his own sentiments; and tells him that even the most prosperous of his tribe who have made their fortunes in America, return in their dreams to the green English lanes and farmyards. "There they are with their boxes on the ground displaying their goods to the honest rustics and their dames and their daughters, and selling away and chaffering and laughing just as of old. And there they are again at nightfall in the hedge alehouses, eating their toasted cheese and their bread, and drinking the Suffolk ale, and listening to the roaring song and merry jests of the labourers." It is the old picturesque country life which fascinates Mr. Borrow, and he was fortunate enough to plunge into the heart of it before it had been frightened away by the railways. *Lavengro* is a strange medley, which is nevertheless charming by reason of the odd idiosyncrasy which fits the author to interpret this fast vanishing phase of life. It contains queer controversial irrelevance—conversations or stories which may or may not be more or less founded on fact, tending to illustrate the pernicious propagandism of Popery, the evil done by Sir Walter Scott's novels, and the melancholy results of the decline of pugilism. And then we have satire of a simple kind upon literary craftsmen, and excursions into philology which show at least an amusing dash of innocent vanity. But the oddity of these quaint utterances of a humourist who seeks to find the most congenial mental food in the Bible, the Newgate Calendar, and in old Welsh literature, is in thorough keeping with the situation. He is the genuine tramp whose experience is naturally made up of miscellaneous waifs and strays; who drifts into contact with the most eccentric beings, and parts company with them at a moment's notice, or catching hold of some stray bit of out-of-the-way knowledge follows it up as long as it amuses him. He is equally at home compounding narratives of the lives of eminent criminals for London booksellers, or making acquaintance with thimblerriggers, or pugilists, or Armenian merchants, or becoming a hermit in his remote dingle, making his own shoes and discussing theology with a postboy, a feminine tramp, and a Jesuit in disguise. The compound is too quaint for fiction, but is made interesting by the quaint vein of simplicity and the touch of genius which brings out the picturesque side of his roving existence, and yet leaves one in doubt how far the author appreciates his own singularity. One old gipsy lady in particular, who turns up at intervals, is as fascinating as Meg Merrilees, and at once made life-like and more mysterious. "My name is Herne, and I comes of the hairy ones!" are the remarkable words by which she introduces herself. She bitterly regrets the intrusion of a Gentile into the secrets of the Romanies, and relieves her feelings by administering poison to the intruder, and then trying to poke out his eye as he is lying apparently in his last agonies. But she seems to be highly respected by her victim as well as by her own people, and to be acting in accordance with the moral teaching of her tribe. Her design

is frustrated by the appearance of a Welsh Methodist preacher, who, like every other strange being, is at once compelled to unbosom himself to this odd confessor. He fancies himself to have committed the unpardonable sin at the age of six, and is at once comforted by Mr. Borrow's sensible observation that he should not care if he had done the same thing twenty times over at the same period. The grateful preacher induces his consoler to accompany him to the borders of Wales; but there Mr. Borrow suddenly stops on the ground that he should prefer to enter Wales in a suit of superfine black, mounted on a powerful steed like that which bore Greduv to the fight of Catrath, and to be welcomed at a dinner of the bards, as the translator of the odes of the great Ab Gwilym. And Mr. Petulengro opportunely turns up at the instant, and Mr. Borrow rides back with him, and hears that Mrs. Herne has hanged herself, and celebrates the meeting by a fight without gloves, but in pure friendliness, and then settles down to the life of a blacksmith in his secluded dingle.

Certainly it is a queer topsy-turvy world to which we are introduced in *Lavengro*. It gives the reader the sensation of a strange dream in which all the miscellaneous population of caravans and wayside tents make their exits and entrances at random, mixed with such eccentrics as the distinguished author, who has a mysterious propensity for touching odd objects as a charm against evil. All one's ideas are dislocated when the centre of interest is no longer in the thick of the crowd, but in that curious limbo whither drift all the odd personages who live in the interstices without being caught by the meshes of the great network of ordinary convention. Perhaps the oddity repels many readers; but to me it always seems that Mr. Borrow's dingle represents a little oasis of genuine romance—a kind of half-visionary fragment of fairyland, which reveals itself like the enchanted castle in the vale of St. John, and then vanishes after tantalising and arousing one's curiosity. It will never be again discovered by any flesh-and-blood traveller; but in my imaginary travels, I like to rusticate there for a time, and to feel as if the gipsy was the true possessor of the secret of life, and we who travel by rail and read newspapers and consider ourselves to be sensible men of business, were but vexatious intruders upon this sweet dream. There must, one supposes, be a history of England from the Petulengro point of view, in which the change of dynasties recognised by Hume and Mr. Freeman, or the oscillations of power between Lord Beaconsfield and Mr. Gladstone, appear in relative insignificance as more or less affecting certain police regulations and the inclosure of commons. It is pleasant for a time to feel as though the little rivulet were the main stream, and the social outcast the true centre of society. The pure flavour of the country life is only perceptible when one has annihilated all disturbing influences; and in that little dingle with its solitary forge beneath the woods haunted by the hairy Hernes, that desirable result may be achieved for a time, even in a London library.



## Mrs. Van Steen.

### I.

COLONEL RANDOLPH woke up one sunny spring morning, with that vague recollection of something having happened to him the night before and that instinctive impulse to go to sleep again quickly, before the memory should have time to take definite shape, which are among the most common and least agreeable of human experiences. It is needless to say that he did not achieve a return to oblivion. The mere fact of having to make an effort to obtain sleep is usually quite sufficient to frighten sleep away, and Colonel Randolph succeeded no better than did his fellow-mortals in the surrounding city, many of whom must at that same moment have been dismally recalling debts incurred, engagements entered into, high words exchanged, or other seeds of trouble foolishly sown on the previous evening, and repented of too late. The Colonel's case, however, was not so bad as any of these; it was only that he had fallen in love. After sitting up in bed for a few minutes and rubbing his eyes, he remembered all about it, and muttered a word or two under his breath with the deprecatory smile of one who is conscious of having perpetrated an act of folly, and expects to be laughed at for it.

What he said to himself was, "It's very ridiculous—utterly ridiculous. Upon my word it is!"

And yet, upon the face of it, there was no reason why Colonel Randolph in love should be more ridiculous than any other man in a similar predicament. It is true that he was nearer fifty than forty; but then he neither looked nor felt his age. He was tall, handsome and active, and the black hairs on his head and in his moustache still predominated over the grey; moreover, he had only recently resigned the command of a smart hussar regiment, and he was heir-presumptive to a baronetcy and an estate with a moderate rent-roll attached to it. He was thus on various grounds a man who had the right to pay his addresses in accordance with the dictates of his heart, and whose marriage might be regarded as a fitting and not improbable event. And, besides all this, he was no novice in the art of pleasing, having been in love many times during the course of his military career, and having passed through the malady without incurring any of the ulterior penalties which commonly attach thereto.

There were, however, circumstances connected with the present crisis which caused the Colonel to feel uneasy, and to take up an expository and argumentative tone in his self-communings. To begin

with, he had an uncomfortable suspicion that he was harder hit this time than he had ever been before; and certainly he had never on any previous occasion succumbed in such a marvellously short space of time.

"Oh, it's simply ridiculous, you know," the Colonel repeated, drawing up his knees and resting his chin upon them. "I'm like the old woman in the nursery-rhyme, by Jove—"this is none of I!" To think that yesterday morning I hadn't even seen her! And now I don't know who she is, or where she comes from, or a single blessed thing about the woman, except that she's a Yankee and that her name's Van Steen, and that she's the most adorable creature in the whole world. I do trust I'm not going to make a downright fool of myself. I've a great mind not to meet her again. I don't think I'll go to that ball to-night after all; what the deuce should I go to balls for? I've done with dancing and all that kind of thing."

At this juncture, Colonel Randolph's soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of his servant, who proceeded to fill the bath and lay out his master's clothes, while the Colonel flopped down on his back, like a guilty thing surprised, and for some reason which he would have been puzzled to explain, went through an elaborate feint of yawning and stretching himself.

Half an hour later, when he was shaved and dressed, and was looking over the geraniums outside his window into the sunny thoroughfare below, at the end of which there was a glimpse of St. James's Street and of the ebb and flow of passing vehicles and pedestrians, he began to feel more comfortable, and the common sense which, as he flattered himself, was one of the chief ingredients of his character, showed signs of reasserting its sway. "No; I'm not going to that ball to-night; I'm hanged if I do!" he said, decidedly. "It's all confounded humbug and nonsense." And with that he took his way downstairs, and marched off to the Club to breakfast.

Colonel Randolph belonged to two clubs, the United Service and the Army and Navy. At the first he usually breakfasted, and, when he had no other engagement, dined; at the second he spent nearly all the remainder of his spare time. He had reached a period of life at which men are apt to fall into methodical habits; and the afternoon rubber of whist to which, when he first left his regiment, he had resorted only as an occasional means of passing time, had latterly become as essential a part of his somewhat monotonous daily life as eating, drinking, and sleeping. To-day, however, he was absent from the familiar room when the clock struck five, and his friends caused the club to be searched for him in vain. At that moment, indeed, he was ringing the door-bell of a certain house in Grosvenor Place, where he had dined the night before, and a few minutes later he was shown into the presence of Mrs. Digby, whom he knew to be as dependent upon her cup of afternoon tea as some other people are upon a game of whist. Mrs. Digby was a good-natured, rather silly woman, considerably past middle age, and innocent of the

smallest pretensions to beauty. The Colonel, who held that all women ought to be young and pretty, had no special affection for her; nevertheless he was quite honest in his remark that he had called at five o'clock, believing that to be his best chance of finding her at home.

"How nice of you," said Mrs. Digby. "I thought you always called upon people when you thought there was a good chance of finding them out. I'm sure most men do. Now let me give you a cup of tea."

But the Colonel declined this refreshment, alleging that his nerves wouldn't stand it. He seated himself in a low chair, stretched out his long legs, and began to talk in a very pleasant, easy manner about Madame Sembrich and the evil deeds of the Liberal Government, and the latest scandals which were agitating society at the time. Not that he loved scandal, honest man; nor indeed did he know or care much about the doings of that portion of society which has taken to spelling itself with a capital S; but he made it a rule to suit his conversation, so far as in him lay, to his company, and upon the present occasion his customary politeness was supplemented by certain private reasons for wishing to make himself agreeable. He made no allusion to the subject which he had come to Grosvenor Place with the sole purpose of discussing: for he preferred that it should be introduced by his hostess, as he felt sure that it would be before long; and the event justified his anticipation and rewarded his patience.

"Well, and what do you think of my belle Américaine?" Mrs. Digby asked, after a pause in the conversation, which her visitor had not seen fit to break. "Isn't she quite charming? So fresh and original and unlike everybody else—and so pretty; don't you think so?"

"Yes—oh yes. Very good-looking little woman; no doubt of it," answered the Colonel in an off-hand sort of way; for it was another of his rules never to praise a lady's beauty in the presence of any member of her own sex. Indeed he was a man who, in all his dealings, was much governed by rules; a result, possibly, of his military training.

"Good-looking!—what an expression! I think she is simply beautiful. And you must admit that she is original and amusing. At all events you seemed to find her so last night; for I noticed that you never spoke to any one else the whole evening. I confess I have a weakness for Americans—*nice* Americans, I mean, of course. Haven't you?"

"Well, really, I don't know much about them," the Colonel confessed. "They generally talk through their noses, don't they?"

"Mrs. Van Steen doesn't talk through her nose; and even if she did, one might forgive her, considering what a pretty little nose it is. I want to introduce her to people and make London pleasant for her, if I can. We English are such an inhospitable race; I quite blush for my country sometimes. When foreign royalties come here we give them a salute of twenty-one guns, furnish them with a special train to London—which they pay for, I suppose—and send them to an hotel; and in

private life most people think they have done all that is required of them if they ask a stranger who brings a letter of introduction to dinner once. In America, you know, it is so very different. My eldest boy was in New York last year, and you can't think how kind everybody was to him."

"Did he make Mrs. Van Steen's acquaintance there?"

"Oh no; I met her at Cannes last winter. I feel that, both as an Englishwoman and as an individual, I owe the United States some civility; so I look upon the Americans whom I meet as representing their country, and upon myself as representing mine so far as they are concerned; don't you see?"

The Colonel said that that was a very proper view to take of international obligations, and was an additional unneeded proof of Mrs. Digby's personal amiability. "But," he added, "the only thing is, one might get rather unpleasantly let in in that way. I mean, one likes to know where people come from, and who they are when they're at home, and all that."

"Oh, I think one can always tell," said Mrs. Digby; "but after all, what *does* it signify, so long as people look nice and know how to behave themselves? It isn't as if one were going to marry them, or live near them in the country, or anything of that kind."

"No, to be sure. Has this Mrs. Van Steen been long a widow?"

"I haven't the least idea. Oh yes, I should think so; she is out of mourning, you see."

"Plenty of money, I suppose?"

"Heaps," answered Mrs. Digby, confidently; "all these Americans have. I'm sorry you don't think her respectable," she added, after a pause.

"My dear Mrs. Digby!—not respectable! What do you mean?"

"You hinted as much; and I am very much annoyed with you, because I particularly wished you to like her. Everybody liked her at Cannes; she was immensely taken up there; Lady Polker was quite as much charmed with her as I was. By-the-bye, are you going to Lady Polker's ball to-night?"

"I had not quite made up my mind," answered Colonel Randolph. "Perhaps I may look in for half-an-hour or so; balls are not much in my line now-a-days."

"Oh, do go—and dance with Mrs. Van Steen. Then you will be able to ask her who her husband was, and whether she mixes in the highest circles in New York, and all the rest of it."

"I don't think it will be necessary for me to put those questions," said the Colonel, laughing. "I am not going to live near her in the country, or to marry her, you know."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that; who knows his fate? And I warn you that she is very irresistible."

"I am too old to dance, and too old to marry, Mrs. Digby," says the

Colonel, getting up. But before he went away he had promised to put in an appearance at Lady Polker's ball.

As he walked down Piccadilly, he told himself that he had wasted an afternoon, and had failed in the object of his visit, which had been to gain some information as to Mrs. Van Steen's antecedents; but it is possible that he may have had another unacknowledged aim in view, and that he was glad to shift on to Mrs. Digby's shoulders the responsibility of having caused him to break his resolution of the morning.

## II.

It was close upon midnight when Colonel Randolph, looking very trim and spruce in his perfectly fitting evening suit, stepped up Lady Polker's staircase. He had said to himself that, as he was not going to dance, there could be no need for hurry; he would drop in at the most crowded time, just take a look round, and slip away again. As soon, therefore, as he had shaken hands with the lady of the house, he made his way into the dancing-room, and stood for awhile in the doorway with folded arms, surveying the scene, which, indeed, was a sufficiently pretty one. There was a crowd, but it was not so great as to render dancing a mere figure of speech; the rooms were spacious for a London house, and were profusely decorated with cut flowers, after the rather extravagant modern fashion; huge blocks of ice placed here and there, and artistically covered with sprays of creeping plants, kept the air cool; the lighting was so contrived as to be at once brilliant and soft. It is doubtful, however, whether the Colonel's wandering eyes noted any of these agreeable details. It was not of inanimate beauty that they were in search, and after the appearance of a certain couple at the other end of the room, their range of conscious vision became narrowed to the limits of a very small area. The Colonel's, to be sure, were by no means the only pair of eyes present that persistently followed Mrs. Van Steen's graceful movements. The little American lady had caused a genuine sensation, and everybody who did not know her name was asking everybody else who she was. Hers was a beauty of that delicate, refined, and perfectly finished order which is more common among her countrywomen than among our own, and which is popularly supposed—by way, perhaps, of compensation—to be of a specially transient kind. Her age was a doubtful point. She looked about twenty; but probabilities seemed to point to her being some four or five years older. She had small, regular features; her abundant brown hair, which grew with a slight natural ripple, was taken back from a low, broad forehead; her eyes were of the darkest blue; her complexion was a standing evidence of the futility of artificial appliances, as exhibited upon the cheeks of more than one lady in the room; and when she laughed, as she did pretty constantly, a glimpse was discernible of the whitest and most even little teeth in the world. Add to this that she was dressed by Worth, gloved by Jouvin, and wore



pearls and diamonds in her hair and about her neck, and it will be allowed that there was some excuse for our admiring Colonel's dazzled and fascinated gaze.

Accidentally or purposely, she brought her partner to a standstill close to the doorway, and as she happened immediately afterwards to glance over her shoulder, the Colonel seized this opportunity of making his best bow. She turned round at once, and extended her hand, exclaiming, "Why, it's Colonel Randolph! How do you do, Colonel Randolph?" exactly as if she had known him all her life.

There was something about Mrs. Van Steen's bright, frank smile that was apt to produce an instantaneous reflection upon the face of any one whom she might be addressing. The Colonel, as he shook hands with her, was beaming all over, and knew that he was beaming, and wished he wasn't. He was a prey, that evening, to a morbid self-consciousness quite unusual with him, and he had an uncomfortable fancy that Mrs. Van Steen's partner, a certain Captain Gore, with whom he had a slight acquaintance, was surreptitiously laughing at him. The young man certainly wore a faintly amused look.

"So you have made up your mind to come," said the little lady. "I am so glad. I had given up all hope of you."

"I made up my mind the moment I received your commands, Mrs. Van Steen," answered the Colonel, with pardonable mendacity.

There was a short silence, during which the Colonel contemplated his neighbour with eloquent eyes.

"Well," she said at last; "aren't you going to ask me for a dance?"

"I beg your pardon," the Colonel murmured in some confusion; "I didn't know whether I might be honoured so far. If you will give me the next lancers——"

She nodded; and then, turning to her partner, "Come, Captain Gore," she said, "we must not lose the rest of this waltz." And so was whirled away.

"You English people are very shy, aren't you, Captain Gore?" she asked, as soon as an opportunity for conversation presented itself.

"I don't think I'm shy," said Captain Gore.

"Well, no," she answered, surveying him considerably; "to do you justice, I don't think you are. But Colonel Randolph is."

"Is he?" said the young man, with a laugh. "He used not to be shy on parade, I hear. Regular old tartar, by Jove! They say he's to have the command of our dépôt at Canterbury; hope it isn't true. How do you make him feel shy, Mrs. Van Steen? Might be a useful thing to know."

"Ah, I'm afraid you couldn't adopt quite the same means. I only reminded him that he hadn't asked me for a dance, and he blushed and stammered, and offered me the next lancers."

"I should think so, poor old boy! You didn't expect him to do a

round dance, did you? Come, Mrs. Van Steen, I dare say you can manage most things, but if you make old Randolph waltz, I'll eat him."

"Oh, I won't ask you to do that," said the lady demurely; "I dare say you can swallow most things, Captain Gore; but I doubt whether you could quite swallow Colonel Randolph. I will bet you a pair of gloves that he waltzes with me before the evening is over, though, if you like."

The subject of this disrespectful wager came up before very long to claim the promised lancers, and Mrs. Van Steen rose and placed her little hand upon his proffered arm.

"I wish you would tell me something," she said, as they took their places.

"I shall be delighted to tell you anything that I know, Mrs. Van Steen."

"Then, do you consider it vulgar in England to enjoy yourselves?"

"I never heard that it was considered so. We have a character for taking our pleasure sadly, of course; isn't that rather a threadbare accusation?"

"Oh, I'm not making any accusation. I'm only a poor stranger, you know—a Transatlantic barbarian; I'm obliged to ask questions. I notice that none of you ever do appear to enjoy yourselves, and I wondered whether it was affectation, or only a natural deficiency."

"We enjoy ourselves in a quiet way," the Colonel said.

"Well, now, I shouldn't have thought you did even that, to look at you. What do you individually enjoy, for instance? Don't say you enjoy talking to me; we'll take that for granted."

The Colonel, after a little consideration, said he enjoyed hunting and shooting very well; and added, with becoming modesty, that he liked a good book, if the subject wasn't too deep for him.

"Anything else?"

"Well, I suppose I may say that I enjoy soldiering. At least it has been the chief interest of my life. But that's all over and done with now, I'm afraid."

"Why so?" Mrs. Van Steen asked.

This seemed to call for an explanation of the compulsory retirement scheme, with its advantages and disadvantages; the latter preponderating, in the Colonel's opinion, over the former. He was led to dwell at somewhat greater length upon this subject than he might otherwise have done by the kindly interest which his companion displayed in the matter, and by the readiness with which she seized upon every point in his exposition. She put little shrewd, abrupt questions from time to time; her voice was pleasant and soft, and free from any suspicion of a twang; her occasional Americanisms lent an odd and original charm to her speech; she did not appear to be bored by the details of army reorganisation, and evidently appreciated the hardships of sweeping reforms as regarded individual cases. Given a sufficiently sympathetic listener,

there are few people who can resist the temptation of talking about themselves ; and it is a fact that in less than half an hour Colonel Randolph, who was by nature neither loquacious nor communicative, had told Mrs. Van Steen more of his grievances, hopes, prospects, and so forth, than he would have confided to one of his older friends in the course of a year. He and his patient hearer had left the ball-room, and had been sitting for some time in a cool and dimly-lighted library, before he realised that he was trespassing somewhat unduly upon the lady's good nature. He checked himself, with a rather embarrassed laugh, at last.

"I really ought to apologise," he said. "I don't know what business I have to inflict all this upon you. My only excuse is that your kindness has made me feel as if you could be interested in hearing me talk."

"That's just it. I am interested, immensely interested. All Englishmen interest me. You are more or less new to me, you see, and I like to hear all about you."

"For the same reason I should very much like to hear all about you," said the Colonel, emboldened by this candid avowal.

"Well, I expect that wouldn't entertain you much ; all that there is to be said about me can be easily told. Where would you like to commence ?"

The Colonel would gladly have put a few direct questions, but he shrank from seeming to catechise his new acquaintance, and something in her manner made him fear that she suspected him of some such design ; so he contented himself with asking her whether it was long since she had left America.

"Oh, I'm most always over here," she answered, apparently including all Europe in that comprehensive phrase ; "but I haven't been in England before, except just to pass through. I'm by way of being delicate, and needing a warm climate ; so I'm in Italy or the south of France nearly all the time. The year after I was married I went down south to New Orleans ; but that didn't suit me, and now I don't think I'll ever settle down in America again."

She paused, and the Colonel hoped that she would say something about the late Van Steen, of whom he began to feel an unreasonable kind of retrospective jealousy ; but she did not seem disposed to pursue the subject, and there was comfort in the obvious fact that she was not a very disconsolate widow. In his mind's eye the Colonel saw the deceased as an elderly, stout, New York merchant, who had married very late in life, and had considerably taken himself off without loss of time, leaving his widow with all the world before her, with unlimited dollars to pay her way through it, and with all the gifts which Nature had bestowed upon her still in their first freshness. He could not help saying—

"You must be very happy. You have all that a woman can wish for, I should think."

"In what way do you mean ?" she asked, with a quick glance of inquiry.

"Youth, beauty, and liberty," answered the Colonel, after a moment's hesitation. He was not quite sure how Mrs. Van Steen would take such plain language, but she did not appear to be offended by it. Her manner had a mixture of the innocence of a child and the assured ease of a woman of the world, which was a complete novelty to the Colonel, and had perhaps done more than even her beauty towards captivating him.

"Yes, that is so," she said. "I suppose I'm as happy as most people. I am not like you; I don't enjoy only a few things, and those not very much; I enjoy everything; my capacities in that direction know no bounds. And do you know, Colonel Randolph," she added gravely, "my idea of enjoyment at a ball is dancing."

"Is that a hint that I have exhausted your patience at last?" asked the Colonel, getting up. "Let me hasten to make the only reparation in my power, and take you back to the ball-room."

"Well, it's a hint," answered Mrs. Van Steen, "that you might have asked me to dance the waltz that is almost over now."

After that, what could the Colonel do? Before he knew where he was, his arm was round Mrs. Van Steen's waist, and he was fully committed to what he could not help regarding as a somewhat perilous enterprise. His step was a quick *deux-temps*, which he danced with a straight knee, shoulders well back, and chin elevated. He had abandoned round dances some years before, on his return from foreign service, when he found that nine ladies out of ten regretted that they "couldn't do his step." Mrs. Van Steen, however, could do it—and indeed, as he afterwards discovered, could do every imaginable step. She was as light as a feather; her little feet scarcely seemed to touch the ground. The Colonel, who was thin and wiry and always in good training, flew round with increasing velocity, and began to feel a trifle elated by his success. "This is perfect!" he cried. "I could dance with you all night." And though he felt that his partner was shaken with laughter, he set that down merely to high spirits and the delight of rapid motion. What, indeed, could there be to laugh at when they were getting on so well? But, unfortunately for the Colonel's peace of mind, a fragment of an ejaculation from a bystander reached him presently in mid-career.

"Look, look, look! Look at old Randolph dancing! What a——!" the rest of the exclamation was lost, but the Colonel, glancing fiercely over his shoulder, caught sight of young Gore's face convulsed with merriment, and had no difficulty in filling up the hiatus. To be sure, Gore might only have said, "What an unusual thing," or "What a good dancer he is, after all"—but somehow the Colonel could not bring himself to believe that the sentence was ended in that innocent fashion, and he mentally qualified Captain Gore as a confounded grinning young puppy, whom he should like to keep for three months in the riding-school.

## III.

When Colonel Randolph woke up on the following morning, he was astonished and a little frightened at the change which a day and a night had effected in his mental condition. Twenty-four hours earlier he had indeed been in love with Mrs. Van Steen, and had confessed as much to himself; but he had laughed while making the avowal, and had felt tolerably sure that things had not yet gone so far with him but that he could avoid and forget the fair stranger, should deliberation suggest the expediency of such a course. But now he could no longer flatter himself that he was his own master. He might be very absurd in imagining that an American with whom he was barely acquainted was essential to his future happiness; he might be very absurd, and very fatuous also, in thinking that she regarded him favourably, but he could not help having a decided conviction upon both of these points; and as he was above all things a straightforward and practical man, he plainly perceived that before very long a day would dawn on which his hand and heart would be placed at Mrs. Van Steen's disposal. This gave him ample food for reflection, and for reflection of a not altogether pleasurable kind. Mrs. Van Steen liked him, he thought, and might, with increased intimacy, learn to like him much better; but whether she would ever like him well enough to marry him was another question. He suspected that the little lady fully appreciated her liberty, and, in truth, it seemed to him that she would be acting foolishly in resigning that precious possession. But although, as was quite proper, his chief anxiety related to the very possible failure of his suit, he did not disguise from himself that even the sweets of success would be mingled with a perceptible drop of bitterness. Colonel Randolph was what the Royal Regiment of Artillery are sometimes—justly or unjustly—said to be: “poor, proud, and prejudiced.” The idea of marrying a very rich woman was not quite agreeable to him; still less was he inclined to ally himself with an American. He would not have given utterance to so illiberal a sentiment, but in his heart of hearts he hardly believed that Americans could be ladies or gentlemen; they were at all events republicans, nobody could deny that. Now the Randolphs, though they had never been very considerable people out of their own county, belonged to a family that was as old as the hills, and perhaps the very fact that their social importance was hardly on a level with their antiquity made them specially tenacious of such dignity as they could rightfully claim. Sir John Randolph, the Colonel's elder brother, was a sour, testy, and punctilious old gentleman, who considered himself cruelly used in that Providence had denied him a son, who tyrannised over his wife, bullied his heir-presumptive, and, in his character of head of the family, was profoundly revered and esteemed by the latter. Now nothing could be more certain than that Sir John would disapprove of Mrs. Van Steen; and when Sir John disapproved



of anybody or anything, he spared no pains to render his disapproval open and unmistakable.

Our poor Colonel pondered over all this through a sufficiently unhappy morning, and had little appetite for luncheon. Turning into the Rag at his accustomed hour in the afternoon, the first person whom he saw was young Gore, who had just come up from Hounslow, where his regiment was quartered, and who greeted him with rather more familiarity than the Colonel quite liked.

"Hullo, Colonel! None the worse for your exercise last night, I hope? Jolly little woman, Mrs. Van John."

"Van Steen," said the Colonel stiffly. "Yes; Mrs. Van Steen is a—a very pleasant person. When do you go to Aldershot?"

"Hanged if I know. Not until after the manœuvres, I should hope. I say, Colonel, do you know anything about our friend Mrs. Van? They say she's got a pot of money."

"Very likely," answered the Colonel drily. "I have only had the honour of meeting her twice; so I have not yet felt that I knew her sufficiently well to ask her the amount of her income."

"Ha, ha, ha!—no; one can't exactly do that; wish one could. I'll tell you what it is," continued Captain Gore confidentially: "I must get hold of some coin somehow. I shall have to marry somebody, or murder somebody, or rob a jeweller's shop, or something. I've a great mind to go in for Mrs. Van."

"I should strongly advise your doing so," said the Colonel. "From all that I have seen and heard, I should say there could be no doubt about her being very well off, and of course you have only to throw the handkerchief."

"You think so, eh? Well, but look here, Colonel, you mustn't cut me out, you know."

"Do you really suppose," retorted Colonel Randolph, "that I should have the vanity to set myself up in opposition to *you*?" And with that crushing bit of sarcasm he left his young friend, and went into the card-room.

But although he entered the card-room, he did not take a hand that afternoon. He remained for about half an hour, looking on, and then left the club with a rather guilty and stealthy mien, and walked quickly off to Dover Street, where Mrs. Van Steen had taken up her abode at an hotel for the season. She had frankly asked him to call upon her, and mere courtesy required that he should lose no time in taking advantage of her permission.

If Mrs. Van Steen had happened to be looking out of her window a quarter of an hour later, she would have witnessed a little scene which would probably have made her laugh. Two gentlemen were approaching her door at a rapid pace, the one from Grafton Street, the other from Piccadilly. They met literally upon the threshold, and each started back as he recognised the other. The younger man burst out laughing.

"Come, now, I say, Colonel, none of your larks! You said you weren't going to try and cut me out."

The Colonel's temper began to give way a little. "I am sure you will pardon me, Gore," he said, "if I tell you (being a much older man than yourself, you know), that jokes of that kind are in the worst possible taste. When a lady, who is a stranger and unprotected, honours you by allowing you to call upon her, she has at least a right to expect that you should not speak of her as you did just now in the hall of a club. Now, if you have come here to see Mrs. Van Steen, we may as well go in together."

Captain Gore was not a man whom it was easy to snub, but he was really a trifle abashed by this dignified rebuke, and followed the Colonel upstairs without another word. By the time that he was shown into Mrs. Van Steen's drawing-room, he had recovered himself sufficiently to make several eloquent grimaces at his companion's back, and to execute a series of significant shrugs and winks designed to indicate that he was in no way to blame for the intrusion of this wearisome old bore. But if Mrs. Van Steen saw these artless signals it pleased her to ignore them. She got up, laying aside the crewel-work upon which she had been engaged, and welcomed her visitors with a great deal of pleasant cordiality.

"Well, now, I call this very kind. I haven't had a soul to speak to the whole day, and I was just trying to make up my mind to a solitary walk. Which of you gentlemen persuaded the other to come with him, and cheer up a solitary foreigner? Whichever it was, I am heartily grateful to him."

Colonel Randolph, who was a little slow about getting his pretty speeches under way, was beginning something about gratitude being due from quite the other quarter, but Gore cut in with—

"You're thankful for small mercies, Mrs. Van Steen. In England we say, 'Two's company, three's none,' but perhaps you look at things differently in New York."

"In New York, Captain Gore," answered the lady demurely, "the more friends that come to see us the better we are pleased; but if you find the number too large to be comfortable, you can reduce it by one at any moment, can't you?"

At this the Colonel chuckled: and the young man, dropping into a chair, made a gesture as though he would heap dust upon his head.

"I don't know why everybody is so awfully down upon me to-day," he exclaimed plaintively. "Colonel Randolph gave me such a lecture as we were coming in that he almost made me cry. He did really; didn't you, Colonel?"

"I dare say you deserved it," Mrs. Van Steen remarked. "What had you been doing?"

"Upon my word, I forget. What was it, Colonel?"

"It was nothing. I didn't lecture him at all," said the Colonel, looking rather annoyed.

"But I want to know. You have roused my curiosity now."

"It isn't a bit of good asking him, Mrs. Van Steen," said Gore. "You'll only make him angry. I'll tell you all about it after he's gone."

When the Colonel heard this impudent promise, he resolved that, come what might, he would sit his young friend out; and to this resolution he adhered with the inflexibility of a just man tenacious of his purpose through three-quarters of an hour of small talk, utterly disregarding the appealing and interrogative glances thrown at him from time to time by his rival. At length the latter gave up the game, and rising, with a last look of mild reproach at the inexorable Colonel, prepared to take his leave.

"Well, Mrs. Van Steen," said he, "you are going to be relieved of number three now. I must be off."

"You remind me of the Italians," she remarked, laughing. "They have a pretty way of saying, 'I will remove the incumbrance,' when they mean to bring their visit to an end."

She followed him to the door, talking as she went; and the Colonel's triumph was slightly marred by a few half-whispered words from Gore which reached his ear. "You'll be in the Park to-morrow, then! And, I say, don't forget your engagement for next week."

Mrs. Van Steen came back laughing, and seated herself opposite to the Colonel. "I do like that young man?" she exclaimed; "he's just as impudent as he can be; and yet, somehow, he isn't in the smallest degree offensive."

The Colonel, not altogether sharing in this view, yet reluctant to speak against an absent man and a rival, gave forth an uncertain sound, which might have been taken to signify either assent or dissent.

"He is a pure British type," Mrs. Van Steen went on. "No other country produces samples of that class. An impudent Frenchman is simply unbearable; and, between you and me, an impudent American is not a very pleasant person."

The Colonel said he didn't like impudence anywhere.

"I won't go so far as that; I like Captain Gore. Do you know, I begin to think you English are a more puzzling people than you look at first sight. There's room for a great deal of contradiction among you; and a foreigner doesn't quite know how to set about forming an opinion of you. You are very insular."

"Perhaps we are none the worse for that," said the Colonel.

"I dare say you are better for it in some ways—not in all, perhaps. Your manners are certainly peculiar to yourselves."

"Does that mean that they are bad?"

"No; not bad—at least I don't think them so. It depends, I suppose, upon the standard one judges by. But they are odd. I have met Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, Russians, and I don't know how many other nationalities. I make my little mental notes as I go along, and I find that there is a common social ground upon which all these people

meet. They adapt themselves to one another, more or less; and so do we Americans when we travel. But you English are not adaptive. Is there such a word? Never mind; if there isn't there ought to be. You have ways of speaking and acting that belong to yourselves and to nobody else. You have made yourselves a little circle out of the general family of mankind, and it isn't easy for a stranger to elbow himself into it. You don't help him much, anyway. I expect one would have to pass a lifetime in England to feel at home there."

"I wish you would make the experiment," said the Colonel gallantly.

"Thank you: but I fancy your east winds will prevent my ever doing that. But, as I was saying, you puzzle me. There is a self-confidence about a good many of you—a social self-confidence, I mean—which doesn't seem to fit in with one's ideas of your national temperament."

"They say a good conceit of oneself is the best receipt for success in life."

"Then Captain Gore's future ought to be safe; he will die a field-marshal. As for you, Colonel Randolph, you are altogether too modest."

"Are you laughing at me?" asked the Colonel. For indeed he was not conscious of any special diffidence of nature, and was at that moment feeling somewhat doubtful whether, in paying so protracted a first visit, he had not laid himself open to a charge of "odd" manners.

"Why should I laugh at you? I am trying to understand you—you and Captain Gore, and all the others. I call you very modest. You would never have danced with me last night if I had not asked you twice."

The Colonel smiled. "Perhaps," he said pensively, after a pause, "as a nation we are rather proud than vain."

At this Mrs. Van Steen looked intensely amused for an instant, and the Colonel wondered why. Could it be that this sharp little woman saw through all his present doubts and perplexities, and divined the inevitable struggle that a Randolph must face before allying himself with a Van Steen? The thought made him blush a little.

"Don't you find it rather lonely, travelling about all by yourself?" he asked, with an abrupt change of subject.

"Don't you find it lonely, living all by yourself?" she returned.

"Well, I do find it a little so sometimes. But I am accustomed to being alone."

"So am I; it's second nature to me now, and there's a sort of pleasure in being quite independent. Besides, I am not altogether unprotected. I have a brother loafing about Europe, whom I could telegraph for any day, if I should find myself in pressing need of moral or physical support."

"And do you expect your brother to join you in London?"

"It's quite likely. I came here intending to stay only a few weeks; but now I'm having such a lovely time that I believe I'll remain on for two or three months."

"I am delighted to hear it," said the Colonel, referring, of course, to

the latter announcement ; but he was not sorry that there should be a probability of this captivating lady's brother turning up in England. The appearance of a male relative would, he felt, be a help towards the drawing of just and dispassionate conclusions. If, for instance, the new-comer should wear a dirty flannel shirt, carry a bowie-knife in his waist-band, and squirt tobacco-juice out of the corner of his mouth, all longings, however strong, to convert Mrs. Van Steen into Mrs. Randolph must be sternly smothered : but if, as seemed more likely, he should prove to be a cultivated and agreeable gentleman, then surely his (the Colonel's) family would not be so unreasonable as to object to the contemplated match.

It may be thought that a man of independent means and somewhat advanced age is fairly entitled to marry for his own pleasure, and not for that of his family ; but this, as it happened, was not Colonel Randolph's view. He had an orderly and disciplined nature ; and as he had never allowed those over whom he was set in authority to question his commands, so, all his life long, he had been accustomed to render willing obedience to those who were, or whom he considered, his superiors. The allegiance which he had paid to his father he had transferred in the natural course of events to his elder brother ; and although it was possible that under very urgent circumstances he might bring himself to act in opposition to the latter, it was certain that he would never be able to do so without great unhappiness. Therefore it was that he was much exercised in mind as he walked homewards, and felt that he would willingly have sacrificed a year's income if, by so doing, he could have furnished Mrs. Van Steen with a pedigree. He went into the club library that night, and sought out a history of the State of New York, in which he for the first time made acquaintance with Hendrik Hudson, and with the fact that that territory had been originally colonised by the Dutch. This discovery gave him no little relief. If, as their name seemed to suggest, the Van Steens could trace back for a matter of two hundred and fifty years, that would at all events be something. But then he remembered that the respectability of Mrs. Van Steen's first husband was hardly the point required to be established ; and this made him all the more anxious for the arrival of her wandering brother.

## IV.

It so chanced that nearly a week elapsed before Colonel Randolph again encountered the lady who had so profoundly disturbed his peace. He was not provided with an excuse for calling upon her again, nor did he seek her in any of those places where there seemed to be a probability of her being found. This abstention was due in part to a certain diffidence, but no doubt also in part to a final struggle between the Colonel's heart and his reason, and to a desire to try the effect of absence upon an infatuation which, as he had perceived from the outset, must lead to



troubles and complications from which a middle-aged gentleman would fain be free. But London—or at least that portion of it which Colonel Randolph and Mrs. Van Steen inhabited—is not a very large place, after all, and it was perhaps scarcely so surprising an instance of the force of destiny as the Colonel imagined it to be that they should have happened to visit the same theatre on the same evening.

The Colonel came in late—towards the end of the second act—and was at once seen by his American friend, who occupied a stall in the row immediately in front of his. She looked over her shoulder and nodded in a friendly way, but did not speak, as an interesting dialogue was going on on the stage. The Colonel, highly delighted at so unexpected a stroke of fortune, paid no attention to the play, and gave himself up to admiring contemplation of the back of Mrs. Van Steen's little head. Soon, however, he became aware of another head in close proximity to hers—a close-cropped black head, which was presently turned round, as its owner bent forward to whisper a remark to his neighbour, and which thus revealed a becoming aspect of Captain Gore's classical profile. This was bad; but what was a great deal worse was the conviction that slowly forced itself upon the Colonel that these two persons were unaccompanied by any one in the shape of a chaperon. On the lady's left hand were two vacuous-looking youths, who evidently did not belong to her; on Gore's right hand was a frowsy old woman in a flaxen wig, who just as evidently did not belong to him. The Colonel was thunderstruck. In his first moment of surprise and indignation his impulse was to jump up, leave the theatre, and there and then renounce all pretension to the hand of a lady whose notions of propriety were so loose as those of Mrs. Van Steen appeared to be; but upon second thoughts he inclined to take a more merciful view of her share in this heinous offence. Customs might prevail in the United States which did not obtain in this country; clearly there might be excuses for Mrs. Van Steen. But there could be none whatever for young Gore, who could not plead ignorance of the habits of English society, and who—so Colonel Randolph said to himself in his wrath—had deliberately chosen to place a lady in a false position. The Colonel was furious. He sat brooding over it all till the indiscretion assumed gigantic proportions in his eyes, and he could hardly constrain himself to return Gore's familiar nod. There is every reason to believe that, if the practice of duelling had not, happily, been obsolete, that thoughtless young gentleman would have received a message before the morning. No such direct method of manifesting his displeasure being open to him, the Colonel was fain to content himself with ignoring the friendly observations with which his rival was so good as to favour him from time to time, and with addressing his own remarks exclusively to the lady. Even to her he could not manage to be quite as polite and agreeable as he wished to be. Despite all his efforts at self-command, he was unable to keep a certain stern and peremptory ring out of his voice; and Mrs. Steen would have

been much less quick-sighted than she was if she had not noticed the additional stiffness of his backbone and the deepening of the two perpendicular lines which time had traced between his eyebrows.

That she did detect these signs of something being amiss was evident. At first she adopted a kindly and conciliatory tone; but, when this proved of no avail, her manner grew colder. She raised her eyebrows once or twice, with a half-interrogative, half-offended air; and, finally, turned her back upon her elderly admirer, and divided her attention between Captain Gore and the stage. Long before the play was at an end, the Colonel had left the theatre, and was striding homewards, angry and wretched. He was vexed with himself for having shown temper; but not the less was he convinced that his indignation was righteous, and that it would be no more than his duty to warn Mrs. Van Steen against compromising herself in such a manner a second time. Doubtless there was a strong spice of jealousy at the bottom of this determination; but the Colonel was so sure of being an honest man that he seldom troubled himself with a minute analysis of the causes of his actions.

He had not long to wait for an opportunity of disburdening his mind. Before he left his club on the following morning, a note, written in a firm, flowing hand, was delivered to him, requesting him to call in Dover Street in the course of the afternoon. "I particularly wish to see you," wrote Mrs. Van Steen; "so, if you should be engaged to-day, I shall be much obliged if you will name some other time when it will be convenient to you that I should receive you."

The obvious resentment of the writer was not a little soothing to the Colonel's wounded feelings. She must value his good opinion, he thought, or she would hardly have been so precipitate in demanding an interview. More than once, in the course of an unusually wakeful night, he had told himself that, perhaps, after all, it would be just as well for all parties concerned if she should prove to have taken a fancy to that young puppy Gore; but now he put all such unworthy thoughts away from him. He went to Dover Street prepared to forgive and forget; prepared to declare himself to some extent in the wrong; prepared even, should the occasion appear propitious, to make another and a more momentous declaration. When he was shown into the drawing-room, he advanced, holding out his hand, with a bright and tender smile.

But Mrs. Van Steen did not seem to notice either the smile or the hand. She was standing by the window, arranging some flowers in a vase, and looking charmingly young and pretty in a cotton dress of elaborate simplicity. She neither asked her visitor to be seated nor sat down herself, but proceeded, without preface, to the business in hand.

"Now, Colonel Randolph, we've got to have an explanation. Why were you so rude to me last night?"

"Surely I was not rude," said the Colonel. "If I was, I can only assure you that my rudeness was unintentional, and apologise for it with all my heart."

"That is all very well ; but when my friends scowl at me, and contradict me, and then go away without bidding me good-night, I generally conclude that they mean to be rude. I treat you as a friend, you see. Come, let us have it out ! How have I sinned ?"

"Mrs. Van Steen, you make me feel very much ashamed of myself," the Colonel protested. "There has been no sin—at least, none for which you are responsible ; and if there had been, I confess that I should have had no right whatever to notice it. But, since you are so very kind as to call me a friend of yours, I will venture to answer you candidly, as one friend may answer another. It distressed me to see you at the theatre last night with no other escort than young Gore."

"Oh ! that was it."

"It was all Gore's fault," the Colonel cried eagerly. "Of course you could not be expected to know that that sort of thing is not thought proper in this country."

"I did not, indeed," answered Mrs. Van Steen. "I confess, to my shame, that I had no sort of notion that I was improper. Well, one lives and learns. I suppose it can't be any way proper for me to be receiving you like this, for instance ?"

"That," said the Colonel, "is quite another thing. It isn't a parallel case at all."

"No ? I should have thought it was more proper to be in a public theatre with a gentleman than in a private room with him ; but, as you say, of course I can't be expected to know. I am afraid it would never be any use in the world for me to try and be like a well-bred Englishwoman ; and perhaps you will excuse my saying that my ambition does not set very strongly that way. I don't like your people so well as I did at first."

The Colonel said he was sorry for that.

"Upon closer acquaintance you don't improve. I think you are rather an ill-natured people, and I suspect you of being immoral into the bargain."

"I don't know why you should say that."

"Well, it looks like it. You seem to take it for granted that there must be some harm in a gentleman and lady being together ; the only important point is that they should not be seen together. If they are in a theatre, everybody can stare at them : so it's wrong. If they are in a private room, nobody need know : so it's of no consequence. We don't look at things that way in our country."

"I dare say yours is the better system," the Colonel said. "I am not going to set myself up as the champion of British institutions. But when one is in Rome, isn't it best to do as the Romans do ? In France, you know, you would not be able to sit in the stalls of a theatre at all."

"Oh ! I'm ready to conform to your customs. I told you the other day that we Americans were adaptive, and I'll endeavour to adapt myself. But I will say that your customs are inconvenient and irra-

tional. What is a poor lone woman to do? It isn't my fault that I have no mother or aunt to travel around with me. Don't you allow any more freedom to married women than to girls over here?"

"If by married women you mean women with husbands, I suppose they may do anything that their husbands don't object to. They have a natural protector, you see."

"And my natural protector being wanting, you are inclined to undertake his functions. I'm greatly indebted to you, Colonel Randolph."

"Indeed, I am not so presumptuous as you make me out," the Colonel protested, colouring a little. "I don't know that I should have ventured to say all this if you had not asked me; and, in any case, I assure you that nothing has been further from my intentions than impertinence."

"Do you think I should have asked you to come here to-day if I had not felt sure of that?" she returned, laughing, and offering him her hand at last. "Sit down, and let us be friends again. I think you are very kind to take an interest in me at all, and I shall be much obliged if you will let me know when I outrage propriety again. In the meantime, you will be glad to hear that a natural protector has appeared upon the scene to take care of me. My brother arrived unexpectedly from Paris this morning."

The Colonel was much gratified by this intelligence. Now he would find out Mrs. Van Steen's maiden name, and have an opportunity of judging of the stock from which she came.

"I hope I shall make your brother's acquaintance before long," he said, politely.

"Aaron will be very pleased," answered Mrs. Van Steen.

"Is Aaron your brother's name?" asked the Colonel, with a look of such irrepressible dismay that Mrs. Van Steen laughed outright.

"Yes; his name is Aaron; I hope that is not improper. Scriptural names are not uncommon with us, as perhaps you are aware."

The Colonel murmured that he had understood as much; but he was depressed and absent during the remainder of the interview. His imagination could not rise to the conception of a gentleman named Aaron. He took his departure before very long, leaving a card for the absent brother, who, it appeared, had gone out to inspect Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament.

On the following afternoon Colonel Randolph, hurrying in rather late to dress for dinner, found lying upon his table a card, which, on being held up to the light, exhibited the name of Aaron P. Muggeridge. When the Colonel read this appalling inscription, he literally staggered back as if he had received a blow, and subsided into the nearest arm-chair, where he remained motionless for some minutes, holding the dreadful card at arm's length before him. It was, indeed, a dreadful card!—dreadful not only on account of the name which it bore, but also by reason of its size and glaziness, and of the flourishes which surrounded its Italian cha-

acters. Mr. Muggeridge no doubt had had dealings with a Parisian stationer, as an American residing in the capital of the gay world might very naturally do ; but the Colonel knew little more of Parisians and their usages than he did of New Yorkers, and it seemed to him impossible that any human being of even moderate refinement or sense of decency could make use of such a preposterous bit of pasteboard. He cast it away from him, at length, with a tragic groan. "My brother-in-law, Mr. Aaron P. Muggeridge!" Oh, horrible, horrible thought!

The lady who sat next to Colonel Randolph at dinner that night set her neighbour down as an incipient lunatic. He met her attempts at conversation with totally irrelevant rejoinders; he lapsed into long intervals of gloomy silence; and the only spontaneous observation that he volunteered was towards the end of the evening, when he turned upon her suddenly, and asked with great earnestness, "If your name were Muggeridge, what should you do?"

"I should change it as soon as possible," she answered, promptly.

"Ah, yes; but you are a woman; you could marry and get rid of it in that way. For a man it is not so easy. He must bear it, I suppose."

"But you don't bear the name of Muggeridge," said the lady, in some surprise.

"Oh, no," answered the Colonel in a low, sad voice; "but I know a man who does."

Our poor hero, like many other excellent men, had his little weaknesses. He did not share Juliet's opinion as to the unimportance of names, and was by no means sure that what we call a rose would smell as sweet if known as an onion. Mr. Aaron P. Muggeridge might be a polished, cultured and fascinating member of society; but not the less, according to the Colonel's lights, did he start heavily handicapped in the race of life. One thing was certain; the matter must be looked into, and the unlucky individual inspected without loss of time. At the earliest opportunity, therefore, Colonel Randolph betook himself to Dover Street, making his visit in the forenoon, so as to be the more sure of finding the object of his search at home. "I will know the worst," he said to himself with decision.

Alas! "the worst" did not seem too strong a term to apply to Mrs. Van Steen's brother. He was a tall, rather stout man of about thirty; he wore a heavy moustache with waxed tips, and an imperial, also waxed; his trousers were of French cut and brilliant in pattern; his shoes had very square toes; beneath his chin was an enormous blue bow, the ends of which floated over his coat; a diamond ring adorned his little finger; and, that nothing might be wanting to complete the atrocity of his appearance, he had stuck a *pince-nez* upon the bridge of his nose, and was contemplating his sister's English friend through it with a mixture of languid curiosity and affability.

"A positive caricature, by George!" was the Colonel's inward comment upon the stranger, who was now being introduced to him by Mrs.



Van Steen, and who shook hands with him, saying, in drawling and rather patronising accents, "How do you do, Colonel Randolph? I am glad to make your acquaintance, sir."

"I hope," said the Colonel, with a desperate effort to conceal his feelings, "that you mean to make some stay in London."

"Well," answered Mr. Muggeridge, "it's uncertain. I shall have to be guided by circumstances. I have come here to attend to a matter of business."

He spoke in a sing-song nasal voice, ending each of his sentences on a high note. To think that a brother and sister could differ so sadly!

"I suppose that, like all Americans, you are engaged in business of some kind," the Colonel observed.

Mr. Muggeridge nodded. "We don't have so many idle men in our country as you have here," he was obliging enough to explain.

"And do you often manage to get away for a holiday?" asked the Colonel. He was thinking to himself, "I hope to the Lord you don't! If the Atlantic were between us I might perhaps contrive to forget your existence sometimes."

"Aaron has a partner," put in Mrs. Van Steen, in her soft, quiet voice. "When one of them is in America the other can amuse himself in Europe."

"Yes, yes; I see. A very convenient arrangement," murmured the Colonel. In truth he hardly knew what he was saying, and was chiefly anxious to escape without having let Mrs. Van Steen perceive the impression that her brother had made upon him. But it is probable that, with all his exertions, he did not quite succeed in that laudable endeavour.

Conversation was sustained after a constrained and desultory fashion for another quarter of an hour, at the end of which time the Colonel took up his hat.

"If you are going towards the city, Colonel Randolph, I'll walk with you," said Mr. Muggeridge.

The Colonel replied that he was not going further than Pall Mall; and Mr. Muggeridge remarked that he guessed that would not be much out of his way; so the two men left the house together.

"What do you think about taking a hansom?" the Colonel asked, on the doorstep.

"It's immaterial," answered the other. "I'd as soon walk, if you say so."

"Very well," said the Colonel, feeling a little ashamed of the impulse which had prompted his suggestion. After all, if the man was to be his brother-in-law, it would not do to begin by shirking a walk in the streets with him.

Acting upon this conviction, the Colonel resisted a temptation to reach Pall Mall by the least frequented route, and, crossing Piccadilly, shaped his course boldly down St. James's Street. On his way he was

stopped by several acquaintances, who stared at Mr. Aaron P. Muggeridge in undisguised astonishment, the latter, for his part, returning their scrutiny with perfect imperturbability. When they had passed on, Mr. Muggeridge communicated his impressions of them to the Colonel, and was more candid than flattering in his criticisms. He even had the impertinence to laugh at the mode of pronunciation adopted by these gentlemen, and to indulge in an exaggerated and absurd mimicry of it. He further opined that London was a great commercial city, but that in point of attractiveness New York was a hundred miles ahead of it, while Paris was a hundred miles ahead of New York. His tone seemed to imply that he held the Colonel responsible for all the shortcomings of the mother-country and its inhabitants. The season was the end of May, and a bleak, dry east wind was driving clouds of dust along the streets. "Do you always have it like this over here?" Mr. Muggeridge asked, in his drawing voice.

"Yes, always," answered the Colonel, very snappishly; and his companion gave him a side-look of mingled irony and pity.

At length the United Service Club was reached; and the Colonel, with the brightening countenance of one who sees the walls of a city of refuge before him, bade Mr. Muggeridge farewell, regretting that the laws of the establishment did not permit of his asking a friend in to luncheon.

"Sing'lar club," was Mr. Muggeridge's brief comment upon this announcement. "Well, Colonel, I'll wish you good day and good appetite. Whenever you feel like paying us a visit in Dover Street, I hope you'll come, and bring any of your friends along."

"Thank you," answered the Colonel, stiffly; "Mrs. Van Steen was kind enough to give me permission to call upon her some time since."

Mr. Muggeridge nodded, and strolled away, with a faint, tolerant sort of smile upon his face, which he had worn, more or less, all the morning, and which the Colonel, for some reason or other, found peculiarly exasperating.

Our tried and perplexed hero spent a large part of the afternoon in smoking, and in pretending to read the papers, while in reality he was meditating over the new complications with which his matrimonial prospects were threatened. At five o'clock he walked across to his other club, and there encountered Captain Gore, who at once detached himself from a group of young men with whom he had been conversing, and caught his elder rival by the arm.

"I say, Colonel, have you seen Aaron P. Muggeridge?"

"Yes," answered the Colonel gloomily; "I've seen him."

"Queer-looking specimen, isn't he? But not half a bad sort of chap, if you take him the right way. I mean to be a real good friend to Aaron—for his sister's sake, you understand."

"You have lost no time in introducing yourself to him, at any rate," the Colonel remarked drily.

"Nor have you, it seems; so we're even. What do you think of him?"

All Colonel Randolph's suppressed irritation bubbled up, and completely overmastered him for the moment. "I think," said he, "that he is the most abominable cad that I ever met, at any time or in any country!"

Then he walked away, repenting of his hasty speech as soon as it was uttered, and vexed by the pursuing echoes of Gore's laughter. Gore didn't care a bit for the vulgarity of Aaron P. Muggeridge; Gore—confound him!—cared for nothing but Mrs. Van Steen's money-bags, and would have married her if she had had ten Aarons for brethren, aye, and a father and mother of the same type to boot! Well, perhaps the fellow was wise in his generation. He was right not to let himself be turned aside from his object by incidental obstacles. "He knows his own mind better than I do mine," thought the Colonel, sighing that greed should be proved a more powerful factor in human resolutions than love. Not that he really thought of giving up Mrs. Van Steen; he felt sure that he had never contemplated the advisability, or even the possibility, of so extreme a step as that. The prospect of having Aaron for a near relative was a bitter pill, no doubt; but it must be gulped down, and had better be done with a good grace. He determined that he, too, would be a "real good friend" to Aaron—that is, that he would do his best to be courteous and amiable to him—"for his sister's sake." "Not for the sake of her money," thought the Colonel; "I only wish she hadn't any money at all."

Animated by such unexceptionable motives, our hero surely deserved to be rewarded by success; but, unfortunately, we live in a world where the just and the unjust have an equal share in the sunshine and the rain; and it is a fact that this poor gentleman obtained little recompense for a ten days' martyrdom save such as an approving conscience may have afforded him. He carried out to the letter the promise that he had made to himself. He not only tolerated Aaron, but took no little pains to show him civility. Day after day he sought the stranger out in Dover Street; day after day he bore him company in his visits to the few lions of which London can boast. He went with him to the Tower; he walked with him in the Park—a terrible ordeal; he took him to a meet of the Coaching Club; he bore with his disparaging remarks, with his bland familiarity, with his obstinate determination to admire nothing and be surprised at nothing. Sometimes Mrs. Van Steen accompanied the sight-seers; but, alas! on these occasions Captain Gore was generally also of the party, and somehow it always happened that the younger man paired off with the lady, while the elder was fain to bring up the rear with her brother.

All this was a severe test of constancy; but the longest lane has a turning; and one morning, to Colonel Randolph's unspeakable joy, Mr. Aaron P. Muggeridge announced that he had received letters which

would necessitate his speedy return to America. This good news was the more welcome to our hero from its arriving at a moment when he was more than usually depressed in spirits. It was the morning of the Thursday in Ascot week, and he was just about to start for the races with Mr. Muggeridge, Mrs. Van Steen having excused herself at the eleventh hour on the plea of a headache. The prospect of being saddled for an entire day with his "Old Man of the Sea," as he sometimes inwardly dubbed the unconscious Aaron, had, for several reasons, been particularly distasteful to the Colonel; but now this seemed a comparatively small matter. Yet another week, and he would have said farewell to Aaron, it might be for years, or it might—as he fondly and devoutly hoped—be for ever. Under the circumstances, it would have been an unworthy thing to murmur at one day of misery. The Colonel, therefore, went off in high good-humour; and, in the train, was quite facetious with his companion upon the subject of a brand-new suit of clothes in which the latter had arrayed himself. Aaron's first care, on arriving in London, had been to visit one of the most fashionable tailors, and the upshot of his interview was his appearance in the light grey frock-coat, and trousers to match, which had attracted the Colonel's attention. He had likewise invested in a white hat, and in a pair of field-glasses, which last were slung across his shoulder by a strap. Thus attired, he did not, it is true, resemble an Englishman much more than he had resembled a Parisian in his discarded garb; but he looked, the Colonel thought, a little less unlike other people than usual, and there seemed reasonable ground for hope that, if he would only keep quiet and behave himself, the day might be got through without the occurrence of any untoward episode.

Aaron, however, was not disposed to behave himself—or, at all events, was not disposed to keep quiet. He entered into affable conversation with strangers on the course; he showed an inclination to be argumentative with the bookmakers; despite the Colonel's protestations, he persisted in betting with an unmistakable welsher for the sake of an additional point of odds, and made a great noise and disturbance when the usual result ensued; between the races he strolled up and down in front of the boxes, and subjected their occupants to a searching scrutiny. He made himself conspicuous, in short, and was a good deal noticed. Just after the principal race of the day had been run, Colonel Randolph felt a light tap on his shoulder, and, wheeling round, met the eyes of a tall, thin and rather sour-visaged old gentleman, who nodded and said, "Well, Robert."

This was precisely the untoward episode which the Colonel had hoped might be averted. He knew that his brother would be at Ascot; but he had trusted to the crowd to preserve him from an encounter which he foresaw would be an unpleasant one. Even now he made a feeble effort to escape, after a few hurried words of greeting. But it was too late. Sir John's eye was upon Mr. Muggeridge, and what was worse, Mr. Mug-

geridge's eye was upon Sir John. Partly from a despairing feeling that it would be as well to get the worst over at once, partly from an intuitive certainty that Aaron was about to request an introduction, the Colonel took the bull by the horns, and made the two men known to one another. Sir John raised his hat slightly; but Aaron extended a generous hand with his customary formula, "How do you do, Sir John Randolph? I am glad to make your acquaintance, sir."

The Englishman took the proffered hand, or rather allowed his own to be taken by it. "You are an American, I presume," said he; not, however, thinking it necessary to state any reason for the presumption. "All this must be more or less of a novelty to you."

"Well," replied Mr. Muggeridge, "they don't *run* horses much with us; but I expect you haven't an animal in this country that could begin to compare with one of our trotters."

"Very likely not," Sir John answered, courteously enough. "You beat us in a good many things; but not in everything—perhaps not quite in everything."

"Give us time, sir, and I have no doubt that we shall beat you at horse-racing."

Sir John inclined his head and dropped his eyelids with the air of one who declines to be drawn into a discussion of any kind with his inferiors, and remarked that, for his own part, he doubted the desirability of international contests, though to be sure they were always popular things. He well remembered the excitement that prevailed throughout the country at the time of Tom Sayers's encounter with Heenan.

"Was you present at the fight, sir?" inquired Aaron, with some show of interest.

"No; being a magistrate, I felt bound to deny myself that pleasure. By all accounts, however, I believe that we were justified in claiming the victory upon that occasion."

Mr. Muggeridge would doubtless have disputed the accuracy of Sir John's assertion if he had not, fortunately, remembered at that moment that money was owing to him over the last race by persons from whom it was advisable to recover it without delay.

"Excuse me a few minutes, sir," he said; "I'll be with you again immediately." And with this cheering promise he hurried away towards the ring.

As soon as the American was out of earshot, Sir John turned to his brother, and said quietly: "I wish to God, Robert, you wouldn't introduce all the tag rag and bobtail of your acquaintance to me."

"I didn't see my way to avoiding it," the Colonel answered meekly. "And after all, John, you can't expect Americans to be exactly like Englishmen."

"I expect a man to be a gentleman. I suppose there are gentlemen in America, as there are elsewhere; but your friend is an arrant snob."



"He is not generally considered so. People know him in London—Mrs. Digby, and Lady Polker, and lots of people. I don't think he is so very bad, John; I don't, upon my word," pleaded the poor Colonel.

"Not bad? My good fellow, did you look at his clothes? And did you hear him talk? '*Was you present, sir?*' Ugh!"

"Our grandfathers used the expression," the Colonel remarked. "Do you know, John, I suspect that many words and phrases which the Americans use, and which we set down as vulgarisms, are merely survivals of our old English speech. If you come to look into it, what constitutes vulgarity? Surely it can't be only ways of dress and of talking that happen to differ from our own."

Sir John gave a short, disagreeable laugh. "Perhaps I may as well tell you," said he, "that I have heard it rumoured that you intend to marry the sister of this pleasing young gentleman."

The Colonel reddened. "I am not answerable for all the silly gossip that you may have heard about me," he replied; "but I can assure you that I am not going to be married to anybody, as far as I know. At the same time, supposing I did contemplate such a step, I take it that, at my age——"

"Oh certainly; there's no fool like an old fool. I only thought I had better warn you that, in the event of your making such a misalliance, I should assuredly not allow my wife to call upon the lady."

The menace was probably a more terrible one to the Colonel than it would have been to nine men out of any ten; but, in spite of all his reverence for the head of the family, he was the last person in the world to allow himself to be deterred from his purpose by a threat.

"I am sorry for that, John," he said gravely; "because the choice of a wife is a matter upon which I should not accept dictation even from you."

"I dare say not," said Sir John. "Possibly, from your point of view, you may be right; but I must be allowed to retain the privilege of saying who shall or shall not enter my house, so long as it remains mine. I thought I would just mention it. Well, good-bye, Robert. See you again soon, I dare say."

The Colonel walked away sadly, his hands clasped behind his back, and his eyes fixed upon the ground. His brother had pronounced a sentence of contingent banishment upon him—of banishment from the old home which he loved with the love of a younger son, unalloyed by any of those misgivings as to the over-costly nature of his possessions which, in these days, are apt to trouble the actual owner of the soil. The Colonel's associations with his home were all pleasant ones. In the surrounding county dwelt his oldest and dearest friends. He conscientiously believed that county to be the most delightful county, and his paternal estate to be the most delightful estate, in all England. Every room in the house brought back to him memories of a happy childhood and boyhood. Except during one period of service in India, he had never failed to spend two or three months there in the shooting season. It was

almost a question whether even the lifelong companionship of Mrs. Van Steen could make up to him for the loss of this annual holiday. That the place must, in the course of nature, become his own property eventually, was a thought which seldom entered his mind, and was probably never altogether absent from that of his brother. He did not know that the childless Sir John felt an irresistible impulse to thwart him in all his projects, and would have been as likely as not to object to his proposed bride, had she been an Englishwoman of irreproachable birth; but he did know his brother's obstinacy and tenacity of his word, nor did he build any hopes upon the basis of Mrs. Van Steen's personal attractiveness.

Thus it was that our unfortunate lover returned to London very silent and gloomy, revolving many things in a perturbed mind. He drove to Dover Street with Mr. Muggeridge; and it did not put him in better spirits to find Captain Gore sitting with Mrs. Van Steen, whose indisposition appeared to have entirely vanished. However, the sight of his young rival was so far of service to him that it enabled him to conquer any wavering tendencies that he might have harboured while in the train. What! should he retreat like a coward before the first breath of opposition, and leave that mercenary puppy to bear away the prize? Never! The Colonel said to himself that he had done with hesitation, and that he would know his fate that very evening.

Gore went away in a short time, and almost immediately afterwards Mr. Muggeridge also left the room. Then, before the Colonel could frame his opening sentence, Mrs. Van Steen turned a smiling face upon him, and said—"Confess, now, Colonel Randolph; you're very angry with me, aren't you?"

"Angry with you, Mrs. Van Steen? No, indeed; why should I be angry with you?"

"You looked angry when you saw Captain Gore here. You thought my headache was all a sham, didn't you?"

"I assure you,"—began the Colonel.

"Well," interrupted Mrs. Van Steen coolly, "you would have been quite right if you had thought so. It was all a sham. I thought I would make an experiment. I wanted to find out whether you would be good-natured enough to go to Ascot with Aaron. I know you don't like being seen about with Aaron; he isn't what you call a gentleman. No, don't protest; I understand it all. Perhaps if I were to talk long enough I could convince you that you are mistaken in some of your impressions; but then again, perhaps it wouldn't be worth while. I have carried out my experiment, and I am satisfied. I asked Captain Gore if he would take Aaron down to Ascot, and he said 'No,' right out; but I suppose there is a difference between you and Captain Gore. Whatever Aaron may be, you are what I call a gentleman, Colonel Randolph—I won't say as much for all the Englishmen whom I have met—and you are a good friend. Some day I hope you will have a good wife, and then you will have to write and tell me all about her, and maybe I'll come and see

you if I am in London again. I'm getting near the end of this visit now. It has been a very pleasant one, thanks chiefly to you."

"Mrs. Van Steen"—— The Colonel's eloquence failed him a little. He was sitting opposite to his fair hostess, and at this point he drew his chair a little closer to hers, and somehow gained possession of her hand.

The effect of this movement was by no means what her previous words might have led him to anticipate. She drew back her hand, jumped up, and moved away a few paces, exclaiming indignantly, "Colonel Randolph!" And before anything more could be said the door opened, and in walked the inevitable Aaron.

The Colonel's chance was evidently lost for that evening, and it only remained for him to effect his retreat, which he did presently in some embarrassment. But at the earliest permissible hour the next morning he was in Dover Street once more, resolved this time that he would have half an hour alone with Mrs. Van Steen, even should it prove necessary, in order to secure privacy, that Mr. Muggeridge should be requested in so many words to leave the room.

As he turned in at the familiar doorway, he was almost knocked down by Captain Gore, who dashed out head first, his hat brushed the wrong way, and his whole appearance that of a man who has sustained some severe nervous shock.

"Bless me, Gore," cried the Colonel, "what the deuce is the matter with you?"

The young man stared at his questioner rather wildly. "Oh, it's you, is it?" said he. "Your turn now. Oh, damn the whole business!" And with that he hailed a passing hansom, plunged into it, and was lost to sight.

The Colonel walked upstairs, smiling to himself. He could not reasonably be expected to feel much pity for his evidently rejected rival. Mrs. Van Steen was not in the drawing-room when he entered; but Mr. Aaron P. Muggeridge, who was sitting in an arm-chair trimming his nails with a pen-knife, rose and welcomed the new-comer.

"Take a seat, Colonel Randolph: glad to see you, sir. I was wishing for an opportunity of saying a few words to you about a matter——"

"Some other time, my dear Muggeridge—any other time, in fact. The truth is that I wish rather particularly to say a few words to Mrs. Van Steen just now."

Aaron shook his head, continuing to pare his nails carefully. "My sister doesn't feel like receiving visitors this morning, Colonel Randolph. Your friend Captain Gore has just left us, after making quite an unpleasant scene. There has been a little misconception."

"Yes, yes; I think I can understand," interrupted the Colonel; "but need that prevent her seeing me? I don't wish, of course, to force myself upon her; but would you mind just letting her know that I am here?"

"Why, yes," answered Mr. Muggeridge deliberately; "I am afraid I must decline to let her know. I feel very badly about speaking so to you after all your kindness to us; but there are occasions upon which a man

finds it his duty to speak plainly to his best friends ; and it seems to come within my duty to tell you this morning, Colonel, that you have been fooling around here entirely too much of late."

The Colonel grew rather rigid about the back ; he did not much relish the expression. But he swallowed down his disgust. "Let us by all means speak plainly," he returned. "No doubt it will simplify matters if I tell you that I have come here now to ask your sister to honour me and make me happy by becoming my wife."

True to his general rule of conduct, Mr. Muggeridge exhibited no astonishment. He went on with his occupation, merely remarking in his drawling, conversational voice, "I am sorry to hear it, Colonel. We are flattered by your kind offer, but we can't accept it. We shall have to get you to excuse us."

"May I ask," inquired the Colonel rather hoarsely, "whether you say this upon your own authority?"

"Well," answered Aaron, who had now finished with his left hand, and was examining it critically at arm's length, "we will put it at that. I conclude I am justified in speaking upon my own authority in the absence of my partner and brother-in-law Mr. Van Steen."

"Good God!" the Colonel ejaculated, "is it Mrs. Van Steen's husband that you mean? Isn't the man dead?"

Aaron drew a telegram from his pocket, and unfolded it slowly. "He was not dead at 8.20 A.M. to-day any way," he observed. "He advises me by cable that he sails from New York at noon per Cunard steamer *Scythia*. You'll allow that's pretty good presumptive evidence of a man's existence."

The Colonel never knew how he got out of the house. There is every reason to hope that the habit of self-control was strong enough in him to enable him to withdraw without uttering any of the uncomplimentary phrases which rose to his lips. For some days he was very angry indeed, and was inclined to believe, as Captain Gore did, that he had been shamefully deceived and befooled by an unscrupulous little flirt ; but time and reflection modified the harshness of this first view of the case ; and he soon acquitted Mrs. Van Steen of intentional duplicity. She might, to be sure, have told him that she had a husband alive ; but she was not bound to answer a question that had never been put to her ; and how was she to know that foolish Mrs. Digby had taken it for granted that she was a widow, and had proclaimed her as such to all and sundry whom it might concern?

Captain Gore made a prodigious outcry over his disappointment ; but the Colonel, who perhaps suffered more deeply, was wiser, and held his peace. He is too sensible a person to break his heart over the inevitable. Moreover, he has lived long enough to have learnt that, as there is little happiness in this world without alloy, so there are few disappointments but have their accompanying consolations, if a man will but look for them.

## Lyme Regis; a Splinter of Petrified History.

---

IN the very deepest bend of the great West Bay which sweeps round in a wide arc from the grey Bill of Portland to the red coast of Devonshire near Torquay, nestles the little forgotten borough of Lyme Regis. A quiet wee town is Lyme, set at the bottom of a tiny valley, where a miniature river cuts its way through soft lias cliffs into the sleepy sea. On the three landward sides the hills shut in the town, so that every road which leaves it in any direction mounts at once a few hundred feet or so to the level of the downs above. These downs consist of three different rocks, a soft blue lias below, a yellow sandstone belonging to the greensand formation midway, and a greyish white chalk on top of all. Once upon a time (as fairy tales and men of science say) the downs stretched all along the coast for many miles at a uniform height of some six hundred feet, and showed on their seaward escarpment all three layers of blue mud, yellow sandstone, and white chalk. Gradually, however, the water has worn a channel for the little river Lym through the two upper strata, and at the bottom of the small amphitheatre thus formed stands the existing town of Lyme. Similar channels have been worn further to the east by the rivers Char and Brit, and at their seaward extremities are built the towns of Charmouth and Bridport. Lesser valleys, again, break the line of cliff in between these three main openings. So now, if you stand on Lyme Cobb—as we call the old stone pier—the view to eastward embraces an undulating coast, which dips down into frequent hollows and rises again into bold hills, till at last the whole country-side falls away slowly toward the Chesil Bank, while on the dim horizon the white rock of Portland stands like a huge wedge of limestone against the faint skyline. The thick end of the wedge turns toward the land, and rises some five hundred feet in sheer height; the thin end tapers off to sea level in the direction of the open channel, and prolongs itself under the waves for many miles in the dangerous Race of Portland—a rocky ledge better known than loved by homeward-bound ships. The cliffs in this direction have all lost their top layer of chalk by the wearing action of water, and only show the lower tiers of sandstone covering the lias—an arrangement which has secured for the tallest among them the name of Golden Cap. But to the west the white chalk still peeps out picturesquely above the whole mass, through green trees and broken undercliff, though its advanced



shoulders hide the view along the shore towards Seaton, and it is only in clear weather that we can catch a glimpse of the distant Devonshire coast, including the long promontory of Berry Head and the dim but bold outline of the Start.

Here at Lyme the present writer generally poses as an idyllic Melibœus through the summer months, accompanied of course by Phyllis and all the little Delias or Damons. It is indeed a strictly bucolic place, almost six miles from the nearest railway, and as yet unassailed by school-boards or women-suffrage associations. And as I—the Melibœus in question—depend largely upon the neighbouring walks for my mental stimulation, I have naturally learnt to love every field, path, and village for ten miles around. Moreover, being (amongst other things) of an antiquarian turn of mind, I take an interest everywhere in the local names and the history which they contain. For every local name has of course a meaning, and it was first given for a definite reason. Thus we may regard names in some sort as a kind of philological fossils, and we shall find that to hunt out their derivation and origin is not less interesting to the mind (and far less rough on the clothes) than to hunt for ammonites and saurian bones in the lias cliffs around us. I propose, therefore, to take you all, my kindly readers, for a few walks in the country about Lyme, examining as we go the names of the various points we traverse: and I hope to show you that these splinters of petrified history are far more interesting, even to the casual observer, than you would be at all likely to suspect at first sight. I choose Lyme merely because I happen to know the country well; but if I once set you upon the right track, you will be able easily to look up the local names of your own neighbourhood in the same manner, and you will find the occupation, I trust, both amusing and instructive.

First of all, a word as to the name of Lyme Regis itself. The little river which has scooped out the whole combe or valley bears the name of Lym. This name, like those of almost all our rivers, is not English but Keltic or Welsh. When the English conquerors—the “Anglo-Saxons,” as old-fashioned history-books foolishly call them—first came to Britain, they found the country in the possession of the Romanised Welsh, whom the same history-books call “the Ancient Britons.” Naturally, they learned the names of all the physical features, such as rivers, hills, and mountains, from those among the Welsh whom they subdued in war and kept as slaves. Many even of the towns still bear their Romanised or Welsh titles, more or less disguised, as in the case of the great colonies London, Lincoln, and Chester; but rivers invariably retain their old Keltic forms. This particular word, Lym, means in Keltic a torrent, and might be aptly applied to the little hill-fed stream before the modern cuts, and weirs, and mill-dams obstructed its impetuous course. When the advanced outposts of the English reached this utmost corner of Dorsetshire, they would naturally ask the Welsh, by signs or interpreter, what was the name of the little stream, and

receive as an answer that it was called Lym. And Lym it has accordingly been ever since.\*

Amongst the records of Glastonbury Abbey is a charter of King Æthelstan, which grants to his namesake, Æthelstan the thegn, six manse "æt Lymè,"—that is to say, at the Lym. From this usage grew up the modern name Lyme, just as Pfyf has grown from the Latin phrase *ad Fines*, or Pontefract from *ad Pontem Fractum*. All through the west country, names of towns are very apt to hang upon those of rivers; such, for example, are Axminster and Axmouth on the Axe, Exeter and Exmouth on the Exe, Bridport on the Brit, Collumpton and Culmstock on the Culm, and Tavistock on the Tavy. In each of these cases the river name is Keltic, while the termination is mostly English. But it is not often that the river name alone (in an oblique case) forms the whole title of the town, as at Lyme. We have, however, a corresponding instance in the first recorded cognomen borne by the neighbouring village of Charmouth, which figures in the English Chronicle under the form "æt Carrum," that is to say, at the Char.

As to the second half of the title, Regis, it is of course ecclesiastical or legal Latin, and signifies that Lyme was a royal manor from the days of Edward I. We get the same termination in Bere Regis and Melcomb Regis; while the translated form occurs in King's Lynn—a Norfolk town often confounded with the little Dorsetshire borough.

The deeply-cleft valley of the Lym contains one other village, besides Lyme Regis itself—a picturesque group of houses higher up the stream, nestling below a pretty grey church on the hillock, and known as Uplyme. In modern English we generally speak of higher and lower towns, but in the old type of the language many other forms were prevalent. Such are High Wycombe, Over Darwen, Under Marston, and Nether Compton. A Netherbury occurs in this very district, near Beaminster. But one of the commonest West-country modes of expressing comparative height is that made by simply prefixing the word *up*. Thus, along the river Otter, above Ottery, we meet with the village of Up-Ottery; while on the Wey, above Weymouth, stands Upwey. So, too, on the Lym, above Lyme, comes Up-lime; while the main town itself is sometimes described in old charters as Nether-Lym-super-Mare. To the best of my knowledge, this distinctively West-country mode of comparison by means of *up* does not extend to any of the counties east of Wiltshire.

If we start from the wee parade at Lyme on a bright summer's day we may walk across to Charmouth by the cliffs and find it a delightful excursion. The pleasantest plan is to avoid the highway and take a leafy cartroad up the hill, which still bears the name of Colway Lane.

\* I owe acknowledgments for the general method pursued to Mr. Isaac Taylor's *Words and Places*, and for some special local facts to Roberts's *History of Lyme*, and Fulman's *Book of the Axe*. But in many cases I have endeavoured to correct what I believe to be their errors.

Perhaps, if you are a town-bred man, you will be astonished to learn that not only every lane and every farm, but even every field in England, has its own name, and that most of these go back in time far beyond the date when Domesday Book was compiled. This farm on the left here, for example, is Haye; that is to say, the hedged enclosure—a common termination throughout Devonshire, as in Northernhay, near Exeter. Its various fields are known as Bustart, Middle-mill, Black Dog Mead, and Four-acre. So, too, this Colway Lane, which was once part of a great Roman road, still preserves the last relics of its original title; for the first half is a fragment of the Latin *Colonia*, as in Lincoln and Colchester; while the second half is the common English word *way*. It runs straight up the steep hillside with true Roman directness, disclaiming to twist and zigzag weakly, like the modern road. By it we can soon cross the mouldering cliff known as Black Venn, from its dark lias escarpment, and descend into the valley of the Char at Charmouth.

The word Charmouth is transparency itself; and yet there are some wild philologists who wish to derive it from the name of Cerdic, the first king of Wessex, descendant of Woden, and ancestor of Queen Victoria. For my own part, when I see Wearmouth on the Wear, and Weymouth on the Wey, and Plymouth on the Plym, I cannot hesitate to decide that Charmouth is so called simply from its position at the mouth of the Char, a little river with a good old undeciphered name, almost as certainly Keltic as any in the land. The view from Black Venn, looking down upon Charmouth and the hills beyond, is one of the finest you will see in Dorsetshire. Besides the sea and the river valley, you have a splendid prospect over a great green ridge, locally known as Hatton Hill, but more correctly called Hardown, up which the Bridport road winds its way in a long white line, which seems to hang upon its sloping sides. The first group of houses on its flank is Stanbarrow, that is to say, the Stone Barrow, so called from some ancient tumulus covering the body of an old Euskarian chief, and spared for ages by Kelt, Roman, and West-Saxon, but long since swept away by the ruthless hand of a modern British squire. The other village near the top bears the quaint name of Morcomblake. This word used for a long time to puzzle me; Morcomb, I knew, means the seaward gap or valley; but where was the Lake? At last I learnt from labouring men that Lake in the Dorsetshire dialect means a small stream, and that such a stream actually flows through the village; while another little rivulet in the Isle of Purbeck bears the name of Luckford Lake. The nearer ridge to the left, dividing the valley of the Char into two parts, is known as Wotton or Wootton Hill. Wootton is a common corruption of Wood-town, the village among the trees; and two such villages are actually to be descried on its summit, half-hidden in the foliage—Wootton Abbots, a dependency of Ford Abbey; and Wootton Fitzpaine, so called from the Norman family who owned the manor. It

is interesting to note that some such place gave origin to the two common surnames of Wootton and Wotton. Moreover, as the local West-country pronunciation is always Hootton, I am inclined to suppose that we get our Huttons also from the same source; just as our Hoods are probably mere Dorsetshire and Devonshire varieties of our Woods.

Looking northward, three or four larger hills block the view inland. To the right, Pillesdon and Lewesdon, the two highest points in Dorsetshire, nearly 1,000 feet above sea level, stand out boldly against the sky. Sailors, who know the twin hills well as a landmark, or rather a sea-mark, call them the Cow and Calf. I don't think I can make much of their names, and so I may as well make a clear breast of it. The last part of course means *hill*, and it is possible that Pillesdon is equivalent to Beacon Hill; but of this interpretation cautious etymologists cannot feel certain. It is still surmounted, however, by an ancient earthwork, one of a great ring which girdles the left bank of the Axe, and is answered by another ring on the principal heights of the right side. These earthworks mark the boundary line between the Durotriges, the Celtic inhabitants of Dorsetshire, and the Damnonii, or men of Devon. Both tribes have left a memory of their names in those of the modern shires. Such early fortifications still bear locally the title of castles. These two nearer heights, for example, between Wootton Hill and Pillesdon, are known as Lambert's Castle and Coney Castle. An old prehistoric earthwork still crowns either summit, and once formed a place of refuge and defence for the inhabitants of the lowlands in time of raids, when the men of Devon came on the war-trail against the homes and the cattle of the Dorset folk. The first of these two hills is known to all the country people as Lamas Castle, and I have no doubt this is really the correct name, while the purely hypothetical recognised form has probably been invented by overfine speakers, who thought the common pronunciation too vulgar for their refined lips, and so evolved an imaginary Lambert out of their own consciousness. Fairs have long been held on this summit during the summer; and though since the days of Queen Anne they have taken place on June 15, or thereabouts, there is reason to believe that in earlier times they fell upon the first of August, or Lamas day, like the many well-known Lamas fairs throughout England generally. An exactly analogous case occurs at Whit Down near Chard, so called from an annual fair on Whit-Monday. As to the second hill, Coney Castle, its name goes still further back in antiquity, for it is derived from the early English word *Cyning*, or King, and so signifies the Royal Camp. The form Conig Castle is still in occasional use. In 833, when the northern pirates first began their attacks, the English Chronicle tells us that King Egberht "fought against the men of thirty-five ships at Charmouth, and there was mickle slaughter done, and the Danes took the day." Perhaps, as has been plausibly conjectured, the name of this lonely down still bears record to the "royal visit" of the ninth century.

Memorials of these early warlike days are generally to be found on

the hill-tops. The valleys remind us of more peaceful times, and of the agricultural energy of the monastic orders. Standing here on the old Charmouth road, and looking down at the smiling cultivated dales beneath, we can see them threaded in a silver line by two branches or forks of the river Char, each possessing its own little plain, and each recalling to our minds this useful work of the old clergy. On this side of Lambert's Castle, the long range which includes Coney Castle and Wootton Hill, and forms the dividing ridge between the two forks with their respective basins, lies the village of Monktonwyld, or Monkton-weald, still largely surrounded by woodland, but seated for the most part in the midst of a fruitful champaign country. Its name shows that comparatively late in the Middle Ages the neighbouring fields were still covered by a weald or forest, like the old Weald of Kent. Of this forest the modern copses and pine groves are the last surviving relics. Into the rich but unoccupied woodland, a good body of monks came from the neighbouring Ford Abbey, to make the first settlement in the desolate vale. They built their little cell, and the village which grew up around that nucleus naturally received and still retains the name of Monkton-in-the-Weald, or Monktonwyld. Doubtless the low-lying plain was then a marshy and ill-drained bottom, with a wide central expanse of boggy land; and the scattered farms of Grubhay, Champernhay, and Thricehay, upon its outskirts, seem to indicate by their common termination that they were originally mere isolated "clearings" in the bush, each one girt round with its own hedge or stockade, and not unlike the modern clearings of American or Australian backwoodsmen. They almost carry us back in memory to the days when Ida, first king of Northumbria, settling down in the wild Yorkshire wolds (the word is the same as *weald* and the German *wald*), in the naïve language of the English Chronicle, "timbered Bamborough and betyned it with a hedge." Uphay and Netherhay, two common names of Dorsetshire farms, thus mean the higher and lower clearing or enclosure respectively.

The valley which girds round the further and more important branch of the Char is known as the Vale of Marshwood, and now contains some of the finest agricultural grazing land in Dorsetshire. But the comparatively modern form of the name in itself shows that this rich dale, upon whose wide meadowlands you can look down in a splendid sweep from the top of Pillesdon, remained untilled and unoccupied till a very late date. Even in the days of old Coker, the Dorsetshire historian, it still consisted of unbroken forest; for he speaks of "the Mershe-wood" in the same way as we might now speak of Glen-Tanar or Rothiemurehus. Nay, at the close of the last century, a local poet describes it as dank and pathless. But in the lower part of this damp and wild level—for such we must picture it to have been—the monks again have left a lasting memorial of their presence. "Wood and water" were the two great needs of the clergy. Secure from the ruthless hands of invaders, they did not perch themselves, like the feudal barons, on the top of de-



fensible hills or steeply scarped crags, but placed their home in the pleasant meadows and possible orchard lands by the river-sides. While the castle always crowns the height, the abbey nestles snugly in the valley beneath. That grey tower which you see near the slope of Hardown is the belfry of Whitchurch Canonicorum. It was the seat of a religious community long before the Norman Conquest (though, of course, the existing building is of far later date), for we find it entered as Witcere in *Domesday Book*. The patroness of the village is a certain Saint Hwit or St. Candida, whose holy well still exists on a neighbouring hillside. In Plantagenet times the name was Latinised into Album Monasterium; and a white church it must indeed have been when its freestone came fresh from the hands of the mason. As to the suffix Canonicorum, we owe that title to its dependence on the canons of Wells and Salisbury.

Ecclesiastical names are, indeed, very common in Dorsetshire and the neighbouring bit of Devon. To mention only the larger towns or villages, we have Axminster, Sturminster, Beaminster, Wimborne Minster, Lytchet Minster, and Yetminster; Cerne Abbas, Milton Abbas, Stoke Abbot, and Abbotsbury; Ford Abbey, and Sherborne Abbey; beside a whole host of more or less obvious cases, such as Whitchurch Canonicorum, Hawkchurch, Holt Chapel, Toller Fratrum, and Stanton St. Gabriel, not to mention the well-known instance of St. Alban's—or, as it ought to be, St. Aldhelm's—Head. The *minsters*, of course, date from very early times: the *churches* often from the Plantagenet period. And while we are talking of matters ecclesiastical, just let me call your attention to the fact that the little village right beyond Whitchurch is called Ryle, and most probably gave origin to the ancestors of the Bishop of Liverpool. You will find, if you inquire into it, that an immense proportion of our surnames come originally from local names, and, for the most part, from those of the smaller towns or villages. The ancestors of our great epic poet migrated to London from some one of the many Miltons—sometimes Mill-towns and sometimes Middle-towns—which are scattered all over England. People who keep a look-out upon the signboards over shops soon learn that in every town many families bear the names of neighbouring villages. Very often even the most unlikely cases turn up if you wait long enough for them. I was once talking over this very subject at Ford Abbey, near Chard, with a friend, and I pointed out to him from inscriptions on the building that the last Abbot of that house before the dissolution of the monasteries had been a certain Dr. Thomas Chard. "There is a surname," said he, "which has not survived at any rate." Only a few weeks later, the news of Rorke's Drift arrived in England, and Major Chard's name became at once familiar in our ears as household words. If you will keep a look-out in your own town or summer quarters you will find abundant instances of the same sort, throwing light on surnames which at a first glance seem wholly inexplicable.

The places we have hitherto considered lie almost all in the county of Dorset. But Lyme stands close to the Devonshire border, so that

Uplyme itself, which is practically a suburb of the old borough, belongs administratively to a different shire. A short excursion in this direction will reveal to us facts of equal interest. The main road to the usual railway station conducts us to Axminster, more famed for the memory of its extinct carpet factories than for any modern reality. It stands, of course, on the river Axe, whose name is also Keltic, and reappears in the Esk, Usk, Exe, and many like streams. The word, I need hardly say, is old Welsh for *water*, as Avon is for *river*. As to the Minster, it is an early English foundation, dating from before the Conquest, and mention is made of the town under its present name in the Chronicle under the year 784, when Cynehard the Atheling was buried here. The existing church actually contains fragments of architecture which may possibly go back to the reign of Edward the Confessor. In local pronunciation the town is always Axmister; and Leland, in the time of Henry VIII., so spells it. Such a contraction is very common in the West Country. Thus Beaminster—originally, as we know from charters, Bega-minster, that is to say, the church of St. Bega or St. Bee—has become shortened in the Dorset mouth to Bemmister. Hence we may conclude that the neighbouring village of Misterton is really the Minster town. So, too, the old English Exanceaster, the castrum, or fortified town, on the Exe, has been clipped into Exeter by western lips, while similar forms retain their hard sound elsewhere. Indeed, as we go southward and westward we find a constant deterioration in the spelling and pronunciation of these words, from Lancaster in the north, through Manchester, Leicester, Worcester, and Gloucester, among the midlands, to Exeter in the extreme south-west.

A pleasant round may be taken from Axminster by Seaton and the mouth of the Axe home to Lyme. Soon after leaving the town, we reach the little river Yart, which we cross by Yarty Bridge. Like all the other river names, Yart is good Keltic; and in the upper part of its course stands a village with the doubly Keltic name of Yarcombe, that is Yart Valley; for combe is the Welsh word *cwm* (an enclosed dell) familiar to all Snowdon climbers, and reappearing again throughout England even among the thoroughly Teutonic South Downs near Brighton. But in the second part of the word Yarty we have a real English root. Yarty means the island on the Yart. Now, almost all the islands round the English coast end in *y* or *ey*, as, for example, Sheppey, Walney, Anglesey, Lundy, and Bardsey. In many inland places, not now insulated, but once cut off by rivers or marshes, we meet with the same termination, as in Ely, Athelney, and Oseney. Often it occurs in a corrupt form: thus the largest island in Poole Harbour is called Branksea (that is, Brank's island); while Chelsea and Battersea were once eyots in the Thames. Anglesey is now commonly written Anglesea. In all these cases we have to deal with the old English word *ig*, an island, the latter term itself being a corruption of *igland*, and the false spelling being due to a confusion with the Norman French *isle*, a

derivative of the Latin *insula* (Italian, *isola* ; old French, *isle* ; modern French, *île*.) So Yarty really bears witness to the former existence of a marshy island dividing the stream at this spot, a circumstance which caused the place to be adopted first for the ford and later on for the more civilised bridge. Similarly, Ottery is the island on the Otter, and derives its second title of St. Mary's from the saint to whom its beautiful church is dedicated.

The next village which we meet is Kilmington. This name belongs to a type very common throughout eastern and thoroughly Teutonic England, but extremely rare in the highly Celtic West-Welsh counties. The early English colonists consisted of separate clans, each of which bore a patronymic derived from a real or mythical ancestor. Thus the sons of Aella would be Aelings, and settled at Allington ; those of Boc were Boecings, and dwelt at Buckingham ; those of Peada were Peadings, and they have left their mark at Paddington. Wallingford, Wellington, Birmingham, Kensington, Basingstoke, and Wellingborough, are other well-known examples of like forms. In purely English Kent and Essex, where the conquering "Anglo-Saxons" settled in hordes, names of this type may be collected on a county map by the dozen. But here in West Wales the English only came as wealthy lords of the soil, not as real working settlers and cultivators ; so that in the Lyme district, for ten miles or so in every direction, I know of only two cases where English clans have left their token on the local nomenclature. The one is Cheddington, near Crewkerne, which keeps alive the memory of the Ceadings or sons of Ceadā ; the other is this very spot, Kilmington, which bears witness to an early settlement of the Culmings. Local lips still preserve the true vocal pronunciation in the common form Cullmiton. Gillingham and Osmington are the only two noteworthy villages of this Teutonic clan type in all Dorsetshire.

Our next point must be Colyford, where the direct road from Lyme to Sidmouth crosses the Coly, once, as the name tells us, by a ford, but now by a commodious bridge. This road is the old Roman one from Dorchester to Exeter. It traverses the Axe a little before reaching Colyford at a place called Axbridge. A little lower down lies the village of Axmouth, which, like the other river names, is too transparent to need interpretation. Opposite it stands our present goal, the modern watering-place of Seaton. This name, again, tells its own tale too well to require much comment, yet we may say a word or two about its form. There is a place called Seatown at the foot of Golden Cap, which shows by its modern spelling that it only dates from the time when the word *town* had acquired its existing orthography. But our present Seaton is a more ancient place, and contains the older English (or so-called Anglo-Saxon) form of *ton* or *tun*, which signified a farmhouse or enclosure, rather than a town in the modern sense. Hence it is that single isolated homesteads in the country often bear names ending in *ton*, like the well-known houses at Freshwater, East and West Afton, familiar to most

tourists in the Isle of Wight. Such a solitary farm was doubtless the origin of our gay little Seaton, in days when Axmouth was a respectable burgh on the opposite side of the little river. At present, Axmouth has dwindled to an insignificant hamlet, while Seaton, thanks to the railway and its fine cliffs of white chalk and red marl, has become a fashionable little summer resort of a quiet kind.

A short and pleasant walk over these pretty red and white cliffs (whose contrasts of colour are sometimes almost startling) will bring us to the tiny fishing village of Beer. There are only three points in Beer which could possibly interest the most curious mind. The first is that they catch excellent lobsters; the second is, that till very lately Beer could boast of probably the meanest and most insignificant parish church in Great Britain; and the third is, that its name is almost certainly Scandinavian. This last fact is undeniably a strange and unexpected one. To be sure the Danish pirates were in the habit of settling everywhere round the coast of Britain, on islands, peninsulas, and other like suitable spots; and the West-Welsh often allied themselves with the marauders in early times against their Wessex overlords. But there are comparatively few Danish settlements on the south coast, and I was long unwilling to believe that Beer was a genuine instance of a Scandinavian colony. Many considerations, however, have at last decided me to accept the theory as true. Beer is just such an isolated seaward nook as the Scandinavians loved—a tiny valley or combe, surrounded by hills, and opening upon a little cove of its own, shut in on every side by lofty cliffs. Local tradition universally speaks of a great battle fought between a host of Danes and the English *fyrð* near Axminster; and many antiquaries have tried (though not quite successfully) to identify the traditional encounter with the famous fight at Brunanburh, made familiar to us all by the grand old English battle-song. The traditions about this Danish invasion are so numerous, and relate to so many local names, such as Warlake (that is, the stream or brook of battle), Brunedown, and Musbury, that we can hardly doubt their substantial correctness. Risdon says, as acknowledged matter of fact, that the Danes "landed in Seaton in 937;" and whether Axminster was Brunanburh or not, it was almost certainly the site of a great battle with some invading northern host. Of course it would be impossible to enter into questions of detail here; but it is interesting to notice that many other apparently Danish names occur in the neighbourhood. Thus a little way up the Yart we find a down known as Danes' Hill, at whose foot lies the village of Dalwood—the wood in the dale—while the crossing over the little stream is called Beckford Bridge, replacing the old ford over the *beck*, as the Scandinavians call a brook. Beckford, by the way, gives rise to another familiar surname, which all of us know through the brilliant author of *Vathek*, and owner of Fonthill Abbey. In *Domesday*, a manor adjoining Axminster is called Deneord; that is to say, Danes' land.

From Beer and Seaton we may return to Lyme by the high-road, over Axbridge and close to Combe Pyne—the first half of which is our old friend *combe*, a valley, while the second half belongs to the ancient lords of the manor, the famous Devonshire family of the Pynes. At a still earlier date, Combe was the property of the Coffins, another great Devonshire house, and then bore the name of Combe-Coffin. Later on, the two families coalesced, and so gave origin to the ludicrous modern surname of Pyne-Coffin, borne by the branch of the old stock now settled at Alwington House near Clovelly. Combe Pyne, as its name suggests, is a pleasant little vale, where a tributary of the Axe has cut through the layer of chalk and reached the greensand below. Owing to this fact, the course of the brook is bordered by a fringe of trees, rare in the district between Axe and Lym, as they invariably are on chalk downs. You can always spot the places where the water has worn down the level to the greensand by observing the presence of trees. If we prefer it, indeed, we may make our way home through this bare chalky country near the cliffs, instead of by the high-road; and in that case we shall pass the famous landslip at Bindon, the largest ever known to have occurred in England at a single slip, and much finer than its tangled rival at Ventnor, in the Isle of Wight. Close by stands the headland known as Culverhole Point—a name which reminds us of the Culver Cliffs on Sandown Bay. Culver is the old English name for a wood-pigeon, and in the honeycombed face of such chalk cliffs the wild doves used long ago to make their nests. A little further on we pass the village of Rousdon, or Ralph's down, so called from an early lord of the manor. Next comes Whitlands, which obviously takes its name from the self-same chalk, and whose *lands*, turning up *white* under the plough, are the first of the sort which you meet on your way out from Lyme. Lastly, a stroll through the beautiful cliffs of Pinney—properly Pinhay—leads us home again to our starting-point by one of the prettiest paths which you can find even in the lovely West Country. And so ends for the day our etymological excursion from Lyme.

A word or two, before I conclude, as to the general method which must be employed in hunting up the meaning of local names. You will find every town and village in your own pet country haunts has just as curious a history as those about Lyme Regis; but it will not do merely to take the name in its current modern form, and hazard a random guess at its meaning anyhow. You must track it back to its earliest known shape in ancient records, and, if possible, find out the exact historical circumstances which attended its origin. For this purpose you will find *Domesday Book* quite invaluable, as it preserves for us the names of almost every parish or hamlet in England at the time of William the Conqueror's great survey. Even *Domesday*, however, priceless as it is, often fails to give us a trustworthy form, as William's Norman commissioners sometimes Latinised native English names, local or personal, under the most astoundingly garbled disguises. Accordingly, the safest guides



of all are the genuine Early English, or so-called Anglo-Saxon documents, the *Chronicle*, and the great collections of Charters published by Kemble and Thorpe. If you are lucky enough to hit upon your local names in any of these—they are to be found in every good reference library—you will seldom have any difficulty in discovering their real origin.

And now for an example or two of the necessity for finding historical evidence as to the primitive form of names. Take first Glastonbury. In its present shape the name is meaningless. An amateur might guess it to be Glass-town-bury; but the English *Chronicle* calls it Glæstingabyrig, and we then know at once that it is really the bury or borough of the Glæstingas or Glastings, an early English clan. On the other hand, we might be tempted, like Mr. Isaac Taylor, to suppose that Abingdon was similarly the dune or hill of the Æbings, a real clan; but the earlier form in the *Chronicle* is Abbundun, and we learn from the records of Abingdon monastery that the great Abbey was actually founded by one Abba, an Irish monk, from whom the place derives its title. There is a strong tendency for names of this sort to undergo an assimilation to the numerous class which are formed from the clan patronymics; for Huntandun has similarly become Huntingdon, just as Captain nowadays becomes Capting. Again, our old friend Kilmington has been explained by local etymologists as the Keltic Kil-maen-dun (Stone-cell-hill). When anybody tries to impose upon you with a Keltic jaw-breaker of that sort, you may promptly distrust him, and stick patriotically instead to your own native English. The old English form, Culmingatune, gives you at once the true story. Once more, Warwickshire antiquaries used formerly to assert that Birmingham was a mere corruption of the vulgar word Brummagem, that is, Bromwychham; West Bromwich and Castle Bromwich being two other places in the immediate neighbourhood. This is no doubt the true derivation of Brummagem, which is in fact not a corruption of Birmingham, but an independent collateral name. However, the *Domesday* form, Beormingham, shows us that the recognised legal title of the borough really means the *ham* or home of the Beormings, another of the old Teutonic clans.

These cases will be enough to impress upon you the lesson that you must proceed with due caution, and must not give way to mere blind guesses. But if you have access to a good library, and take moderate care, and especially if you are fortunate enough to possess a slight knowledge of the old English tongue, which we foolishly call Anglo-Saxon, you will have little difficulty in doing for other places what I have tried to do here in a rapid sketch for Lyme. The new study will add a fresh and unexpected interest to even the dullest and most unpicturesque hamlets that you happen to meet with in your daily walks.

---

## Buddhists and Buddhism in Burma.

---

JUDGING from externals, Buddhism is far from being the religion which one would expect to find adopted by the Burmese. They are a jovial, laughing, joking race, brimfull of fun and delight, in the simple act of living. Strange it is to find such a people adopting the cold, stern, materialistic philosophy of Buddha. Almost all forms of heathen religion teach men to seek for some sort of happiness here. Christian forms of belief call this folly, and bid all live such a holy and self denying life on earth that they may find perfect happiness hereafter in a better world beyond. The Buddhist comes between and exclaims, "Cease this foolish petty longing for personal happiness. The one life is as hollow as the other. *Aneitsa, Dokkha, Anatta*—all is transitory, sad, unreal." Such a faith one might think suitable for the sullen, truculent Malay, but we cannot understand the Burman holding such a purely ethical religion and still retaining his constant *bonhomie*. Buddhism denies the existence of a Creator or of anything created. "There is nothing eternal; the very universe itself is passing away; nothing is, everything becomes; and all that you see or feel, bodily or mentally, of yourself, will pass away like everything else; there will only remain the accumulated result of all your actions, words, and thoughts. The consciousness of self is a delusion; the organised being, sentient existence, since it is not infinite, is bound up inextricably with ignorance, and therefore with sin, and therefore with sorrow." And so the true Buddhist saint does not mar the purity of his self denial by lusting after a positive happiness, which he himself shall enjoy here or hereafter. Here it comes of ignorance, and leads to sin, which leads to sorrow; and there the conditions of existence are the same, and each new birth will leave you ignorant and finite still. All that is to be hoped for is the joy and rest of Nirvana, Neik-ban, the Buddhist *summum bonum*, a blissful holy existence, a moral condition, a sinless, calm state of mind, practically the extinction of our being. Unutterably sad one would say for despairing and earnest hearts, and more than enough to arouse the pity of every man, not to say of every Christian man. Yet this is the faith of the light-hearted Burmans, one of the most loveable of races on the face of the earth; and the devoted labours of Anglican, Roman, and Baptist missionaries for a couple of decades have been almost resultless, even in persuading the Burman of the hopelessness of his creed. The gaily-dressed, laughing crowd of Burmese young men and maidens go not the less merrily along the streets. Four times in each lunar month the Pagoda steps are thronged by old and young alike. They make offerings of fruits and flowers to

they hardly know what ; they offer up prayers as to a supreme Deity, and deny that there is such a being ; they prostrate themselves before images of Gaudama, and declare that they do not worship them as idols. The young sing and make merry. The old calmly meet death, with their rosaries in their hands, patiently telling their beads. Yet they tell you their faith is summed up in the words, *Aneitsa, Dokkha, Anatta*—transitoriness, misery, unreality—words of hopelessness and despair. If we look below the surface we can hardly say that this merry heartiness of the young, and this tranquil resignation of the old, is due in the one case to simple thoughtlessness and carelessness, and in the other to blind resignation and blank ignorance of what their future state shall be. Let us rather turn to the habits of the people and their system of education for an explanation.

It is in the monastic schools that the strength of Buddhism lies, and it is by means of them that the faith is kept active in the country. The whole land is overspread with these Kyoungs, or monasteries, and through them passes, with hardly a single exception, the entire male population of the country. Outside every village, no matter how small, stands one of these Kyoungs. Away from the noise of the people, with great, well-foliaged trees to shield them from the heat, and cocoa-nut and areca palms, mangoes, and jacks, and other fruit trees to supply them with occasional luxuries, the monk's position seems well calculated to rouse the envy of those who are tired of nineteenth-century theological and polemical discussions, and do not care to have it clearly demonstrated to them that Tiberius and Catiline are much maligned individuals, and that Judas Iscariot has been greatly wronged by the consensus of centuries in regarding him as the type of baseness and hideous guilt. There the hpongyees pass their time without a care to ruffle the tranquil surface of their lives. They have no trouble for their food, for a pious and kindly population supplies them far beyond their requirements. They are monks, not priests, and have no duties to perform for the laity in return for this support. Their minds are never racked by the excogitation of that too frequently excruciating formality of the Christian Church, a sermon. Their natural rest is never broken in upon by calls to minister consolation and comfort to the sick and the dying. Even their leisure is never interrupted to execute the last rites for the dead. They are not ministers of religion, they are monks, and all they have to do is to work out their own deliverance and salvation without regard to any one else. Latterly, some of them have, indeed, assumed something of the priestly character in performing ceremonies which are supposed to confer merit on those in whose names they are accomplished ; and certain duties which most of them assume, such as reading the sacred books to the people, and instructing youth, are of a pastoral nature. All that is compulsory on them is the observation of continence, poverty, and humility ; with abstraction from the world, tenderness to all living things, and the obligation of certain moral precepts, and numerous ritual obser-

vances. As members of the holy Sangha, one of the precious triad, the hpongyees are approached with tokens of worship by the laity, in recognition of their ascetic life. The members of the Order lay claim, often with very little ground, to superior wisdom and sanctity, but not to any spiritual powers. Indeed, in a religious system which acknowledges no supreme God, it is impossible for any one to become an intercessor between a creator whose existence is denied, and man who can only attain to a higher state by his own personal exertions and earnest self-denial. Where there are no gods, no one is required to avert their anger or sue for their pity by fervent prayer. Consequently not even Gaudama himself could attain to the position of Peter, and claim to hold the Keys of Heaven and Hell. The doors of the Kyoung are always open as well to those who wish to enter, as to those who wish to leave it. As a matter of fact, almost every Burman—certainly every respectable Burman—at some period of his life, dons, for a longer or shorter time, the yellow robe of the monk.

There is but one order, but there are grades in sanctity and approximation to the final release. Most of the scholars, who enter these Talapoinic houses, put on the yellow robe; thus at the same time learning to read and write, and acquiring *kutso*, or merits for future existences. Some, especially nowadays in British Burma, never do so, or only for a few days; not a few for no longer than twenty-four days. In Upper Burma, however, the desire for merit seems much greater, or perhaps we may say, the knowledge of the value of time is altogether wanting, as it certainly exists only in very modified fashion in our provinces. At any rate, in Independent Burma the adoption of the yellow monkish garments for a season is almost universal. These disciples or novices are called SHINS or KOYINS. His entry into the monastic orders is perhaps the most important event in the life of the Burman. Only under the robe of the recluse, and through the abandonment of the world, can he completely fulfil the law, and hope to find the way to eventual deliverance from the misery of ever-recurring existences. The common time for the ceremony is just before the *Wa*, or Buddhist Lent, lasting from July to October, roughly speaking. During Lent no ceremony or feast is lawful, and most of the more respectable Burmans send their sons into the Kyoung for these three months. The boy's admission is made the occasion of a great feast. A *baydin tsaya*, or wise woman, is consulted, and as soon as she has named a day that is likely to be fortunate, preparations are begun. Three or four girls, the intending *moving shin's* sisters, or friends of the family, dress themselves up in their best silks and jewels—usually borrowing a large quantity of the latter—and go the round of the town, announcing to all relatives, friends, and neighbours when the induction is to take place, and where it will be. At each house they leave a little morsel of LET-PET, pickled tea (the triturated leaves of the *Elæodendron orientale*), rolled up in a palm leaf, as a kind of invitation card. Every one sends some little present, to help towards making the feast as grand as possible; and

very often some one else, whose son is also going to be inducted, suggests that the two should join forces. Not unfrequently half-a-dozen unite in this way. On the appointed day the young neophyte dresses himself in his best clothes, and loads himself with all the family jewels. He mounts a pony, or ascends a gaily-decorated car. A gilt umbrella is held over his head; a band of music goes before, and all his friends and relatives gather round him in their best; the young man dancing and capering and singing, the girls gorgeous with brocaded *TAMEINS* and powdered faces, and so the party sets out. They go the round of all the boy's friends and acquaintances, he bidding each of them farewell, and they giving something towards the expenses or solace of the band and the supernumeraries. All this *tumasha*, this jovial march round, is meant to represent the *moung shin's* abandonment of the follies of this world, and intended to recall Gaudama's triumphal entry into *Kapilavastre*, amidst a crowd of rejoicing clansmen, on the birth of his child, and just previous to his abandonment of family and home to become a houseless mendicant ascetic and embryo Buddha.

When the round of visits has been paid, the procession turns towards the monastery; the presents for the monks are brought to the front, and all enter reverently, and, of course, shoeless. The youth's head is shaved, his parents standing by to receive the hair as it falls. He throws off all his fine clothes and jewellery, bathes, and puts on the dull yellow robe of the recluse. Nothing now remains but to present him to the *kyoung-pogo*, the head of the society. This is done by the postulant's father. The abbot asks the boy's name, and motions him to take his place among the other probationers. Everything is then over, the friends return home, and probably finish up the day at a *pwai*, or dramatic performance, given by the lad's family in honour of the day. The *KOYIN* remains behind in the *Kyoung*, subject—whether his stay be for a few days, or months, or for years—to all the strict discipline of the place. In addition to the five great commandments enjoined by Gaudama on all Buddhists, there are other five precepts, obligatory on all dwelling in the monastery. The five universal commandments are:—

1. Thou shalt not kill.
2. Thou shalt not steal.
3. Thou shalt not indulge in unlawful passions.
4. Thou shalt not lie.
5. Thou shalt not drink intoxicating liquor.

The five now imposed upon our *KOYIN* are:—

1. Not to eat after noon.
2. Not to sing, or dance, or play any musical instrument.
3. Not to use cosmetics.
4. Not to stand on platforms or high places.
5. Not to touch gold or silver.

His duties are to attend on the elders of the *Kyoung*, and minister to



their wants, bringing and laying before them, at stated times, the betel box, &c., and following the hpongyee as bearer of his umbrella or fan. The latter is shaped like the letter S, whence the name Talapoints given to the monks by some writers. Most of the *shins* in Lower Burma leave almost immediately, in order to enter or re-enter into the English school. In Upper Burma they stay for some years, to complete their education, and then leave and return to a secular life. Some grow fond of the ways of the monastery, and remain to study and qualify to become monks themselves. When they have acquired sufficient knowledge, and attained the age of twenty, they are solemnly admitted among the professed members of the brotherhood, under the name of PATZIN or OOPATZIN. A few conditions are imposed. The applicant must state that he is free from contagious disease, consumption, and fits; that he is neither a slave, nor a debtor, nor a soldier, and that he has obtained the consent of his parents. For those who have not grown up in the Kyoung, and whose attainments are therefore unknown, a public examination, conducted in a *thain*, or open, triple-roofed building, near the Kyoung, or the pagoda, is necessary. The candidate is asked a few simple questions, in the presence of any one who likes to come, by the elders of the house. Any one so inclined may further catechise him; but a rejection on the ground of ignorance or insufficient preparation is almost unknown. In the early days of Buddhism, the aspirant was admitted without any ceremony; merely having his head shaved, putting on the yellow robes of the YAHAN, and thenceforth leading an ascetic life. Later somewhat of an ordination ceremonial grew up. On the appointed day, chosen—like that of first entrance into the Kyoung—as being a propitious one, a chapter of monks meet together. This chapter must consist of not less than ten monks, and the president must be a YAHAN of at least ten years' standing. Mats are laid down for them in the chief room of the monastery, and they seat themselves in two rows facing towards one another. The president places himself at the head of one row. The sponsor of the postulant then brings him forward. The sponsor is invariably a monk. The candidate comes up in lay dress, but bearing with him the three garments of the hpongyee. Halting at a respectful distance, he SHEKHOS, does obeisance to the president and deposits a small present, necessary as a sign of respect. Bowing his forehead three times to the ground, he thrice begs for admittance to the order:—"Pity, Lord; have pity on me: graciously take these garments, and grant me admittance to the order, that I may escape from sin and misery, and enter on the path to NEIKKAN." The head of the chapter then bends forward, and taking up the robes, throws them over the candidate's shoulders, and repeats a Pali rubric, to the effect that the robes are only worn out of modesty, and because the flesh is too weak without them to endure the extremes of heat and cold; winding up with a formula on the transitoriness and misery of all human things. The postulant then retires to put on the monkish vestments, and reappears

before the chapter, again reverently shekhoing. The president then repeats "the triple consolation," the novice reciting it three times after him:—"My trust is in the Lord, the law, the assembly, the three precious things." HPAYAH, TAYA, THINGA, YAYDANA, THONEA. Then the "ten precepts," mentioned above, are similarly intoned. Three times, once more saluting the head of the chapter, the mendicant humbly begs him to become his superior. This request being granted, the begging-bowl is hung round the ascetic's neck, and he again falls on his knees and addresses the whole chapter:—"Mendicants, I seek for admittance into your order; have mercy on me and grant my prayer." The members then question him formally as to his age, his freedom from disease, his name, and that of his intended abbot; whether he has obtained the consent of his parents, and is *sui juris*. Then three times a monk asks whether any one knows just cause or impediment why he should not be admitted. No objection being entered, the whole body of examiners bend down before the president, and say, "The candidate has been admitted into the Order, A. being his superior. The questions have been asked, and none have objected; so we all agree."

A monk then stands up and reads a selection from the full rule of the order, which contains 227 precepts. This done, the ordination ceremonial is over, and the chapter disperses, the newly admitted hpongyee falling into the train of the head of his monastery. The state of OOPATZIN is, properly speaking, that of hpongyee. Every other step or promotion in the sacred hierarchy is purely honorific. Nevertheless the new member must reside, for some time at least, in the same monastery as his superior. He acts as the abbot's secretary and personal attendant, and treats him with all the respect that a son would a father, while the superior, in his turn, instructs him and directs his studies. In time, however, he moves away to some other monastery, possibly led to do so by its superior collection of commentaries, or its proximity to some sacred shrine. Or perhaps some pious layman who has made his fortune and desires to acquire merit, selects our oopatzin as his teacher and spiritual master, and builds a Kyoung for him, dedicated with great ceremony and much feasting. Then the simple hpongyee becomes a KYOUNG-POGO, or abbot, and gathers round him a following of his own. He has now attained the full rank of his order, but he still remains dependent on charity for his daily food. He is still a hpongyee. He has no new obligations imposed upon him, but neither does he escape from any of the former duties. He simply has power of jurisdiction over all the brethren in his Kyoung. The founder of the Kyoung gains far more earthly distinction. He is regarded as a LOOGYEE, an elder, and acquires the title of KYOUNS-TAGA, founder of a monastery, by which name he is thereafter always addressed, and which he prefixes to his signature in all documents. He rests comfortable in the assurance that in a future existence he will certainly not be a woman, and possibly not a man; will at any rate be some estimable animal, such as a pig or an elephant,

and not an objectionable creature like a snake or a louse. Our hpongyee probably remains in this position of KYOUNG-POGO or TSAYA for a long time, unless he develops a character for superior saintliness or learning. In process of years, he becomes a "head of assembly," a GINE-OKE or TSADAU. A TSAYA is a teacher; a TSADAU, a royal, or lord teacher. He now has under his management a cluster of Kyoungs, exercising power over their inmates as well as their heads. He gives his advice in all the little affairs of these communities, enforces the rules against malcontents and corrects the abuses. Still, however, unless very old, he is a mendicant, and must go out every morning with his begging-bowl. His dress is the same as the most recently admitted KOYIN, and in the eyes of the world he is only a little farther on in the path to NEIKBAN. When very aged and decrepit he is excused from the daily begging tour, but has to go round every now and again to preserve the letter of the law and show a proper example of humility.

In Lower Burma there is no head of the hierarchy. Under native rule there was a "pope" whose authority on all matters of religion was recognised throughout the country. This was the THA THANA BEIN TSADAU GYEE. With the conquest of Pegu, however, he has lost all his authority, and the last incumbent exercised control only over the monasteries in the circle of Mandalay. At present the post is, as far as I know, unfilled. The THA THANA BEIN has usually been the preceptor of "the Lord of the Umbrella-bearing chiefs, and Great King of Righteousness;" Golden Foot, in that august potentate's youthful days. MINDONE MIN's (the late King) teacher, however, is dead, and the present young ruffian has but scant reverence for the monks. After leaving the S.P.G. Royal School, in Mandalay, Theebau went into a monastery and remained there almost constantly until his accession to the throne. He passed as PATAMA BYAN in the theological examination, for ordination as OOPATZIN with great *éclat*, to the enthusiastic delight of his pious old father MINDONE MIN, "the Fifth Founder of Religion." The old gentleman could talk of nothing else for a while, and gave the cocks and hens on Mandalay Hill double rations in honour of the event. The Mandalay Theological Tripos is supposed to be a much stiffer business than the examination is elsewhere, and the competitors are placed in classes, young Theebau figuring in the first division. His researches into the three BEETAGHATS did not seem to have done him much good however. Ugly stories were round about the ongoinings of Theebau and sundry other young princes in the KYOUNG-DAU GYEE, the royal monastery. Probably the venerable KYOUNG-POGO found it necessary to rate the raffish KOYIN, possibly even to set him to water the sacred Bo-tree, or sweep out the rooms, as a punishment for his peccadilloes. However that may be, it is certain that Theebau, as soon as he had ascended to the throne, packed off his old superior, along with a couple of thousand other hpongyees, to Lower Burma. Thus it comes that there is at present, not even in Upper Burma, a head of Burman Buddhism.

The account of a day spent in one of the monastic communities may be interesting, as showing how far a little method will go towards making the day pass, with the least possible amount of work and the least chance of *ennui*. At half-past five o'clock in the morning all rise and perform their ablutions. The proper time, according to the DINA CHARIYAWA, is before daylight, which in these low latitudes never comes in much before six. After washing, they all arrange themselves before the image of Buddha, the abbot at their head, the rest of the community, monks, novices, and pupils, according to their order. All together intone their morning prayers. This done they each in their ranks present themselves before the KYOUNG-POGO, and pledge themselves to observe during the day the vows or precepts incumbent upon them. They then separate for a short time, the pupils to sweep the floor of the KYOUNG and bring the drinking-water for the day, filter it, and place it ready for use; the novices and novices of full rank to sweep round the sacred Bo-tree and water it; the elders to meditate in solitude on the regulations of the Order. Some also offer flowers before the pagoda, thinking the while of the great virtues of the Teacher and of their own short-comings. Then comes the first meal of the day, after which the whole community betakes itself to study for an hour. Afterwards, about eight o'clock, or a little later, they set forth in an orderly procession with the abbot at their head, to beg their food. Slowly they wend their way through the chief street of the town or village, halting when any one comes out to pour his contribution into the big soup-tureen-like alms-bowl, but never saying a word. It is they who confer the favour, not the givers. Were it not for the passing of the mendicants, the charitable would not have the opportunity of gaining for themselves merit. Not even a look rewards the most bounteous donation. With downcast eyes and hands clasped beneath the begging-bowl they pass on solemnly, meditating on their unworthiness and the vileness of all human things. Of course there are certain places where they receive a daily dole; but should the open-handed goodwife have been delayed at the market chatting with the gossips, or the pious old head of the house be away from home, the recluses would rather go without breakfast than halt for a second, as if implying that they remembered the house as an ordinary place of call. It is a furlong on the noble path lost to the absentees, and the double ration of the following day is noted without a phantom of acknowledgment. So they pass round, circling back to the monastery after a perambulation lasting perhaps an hour or an hour and a half. A portion of all the alms received on the tour is solemnly offered to Buddha, and then all take their breakfasts. In former days this used to consist solely of what had been received during the morning; but the majority of monasteries have, sad to say, fallen away from the strictness of the old rule. Only a few of the more austere abbots enforce the observance of the earlier asceticism. Most communities fare much better than would be possible if they ate the miscellaneous conglomerate which is turned out of the alms-

howls. That indiscriminate mixture of rice, cooked and raw ; pease boiled and parched ; fish, flesh, and fowl, curried and plain ; GNAPEE (a condiment made of decayed fish, smelling horribly and tasting like anchovy sauce gone bad, but nevertheless wonderfully esteemed by the Burmans), and LET-HPET (pickled tea), is but seldom consumed by the ascetics of the present day. It is handed over to the little boys, the scholars of the community, who eat as much of it as they can and give the rest to the crows and the pariah dogs. The HPONGYEEs and POYINS find a breakfast ready prepared for them when they return from their morning's walk, and are ready to set to with healthy appetites. Breakfast done, they wash out the begging-bowls and chant a few prayers before the image of Buddha, meditating for a short time on kindness and affection. During the succeeding hour the scholars are allowed to play about, but must not make a noise ; the monks pass the time in leisurely conversing ; the abbot usually has visits from old people, or the KYOUNGTAGA, the patrón of his benefice, who comes to consult with him on various matters, or to converse about religion. About half-past eleven there is a light refection of fruits, and then their work begins again. If no one of his own choice cares to teach the lay scholars, some one is selected by the abbot. The monks and novices take up their commentaries, or perhaps copy one out, asking the abbot or one of the YAHANS about passages which they do not understand. This goes on till three o'clock, when the SHINS and scholars perform any domestic duties which may be required about the monastery. The scholars are then at liberty to run home and get some dinner, as nothing solid is eaten in the monastery after noontide. They return at six o'clock, or sunset, recalled by the unmelodious sounds of a big wooden bell struck with a heavy mallet. This serves also as a summons for the regular members of the Order, who have probably been out for a stroll to some neighbours, or to visit the pagoda. From nightfall till half-past eight scholars and novices stand before the abbot and some of the YAHANS and recite all that they have learned, the whole sum of their literary knowledge, from the letters in the THEM-BON-GYEE, the A, B, C, up to the book which was last committed to memory. The Pali rituals are chanted with surprising energy, abundance of sound supplying the place of a knowledge of the sense.

Few even of the YAHANS have any but the most superficial knowledge of the sacred language. Afterwards, if there is time, or if the KYOUNGTAGO is an enthusiast, that dignitary delivers a homily, or an exposition of some commentary. The evening closes up with devotions in the presence of Buddha's image ; and when the last sounds of the mournful chant have died away, a monk stands up, and with a loud voice proclaims the day of the week, the day of the month, and the number of the year. Then all SHE-KHO before Buddha thrice, and thrice before the abbot, and retire to rest. The same routine gone through day after day may become monotonous, and lose some of its effectiveness ; but such a



school, presided over by an abbot of intelligence, and held in reverence by the people, cannot fail to have a powerful effect upon the minds of an impulsive people like the Burmese; and when we remember that the entire male population of the country passes through such schools, we can well understand how the mere teaching of Western secular knowledge has but little results in shaking the power of Buddhism among the people. Their manners may be softened and civilised; but they remain as firm as ever in their ancient faith, and more and more convinced that no other creed would suit them so well. The great number of the monasteries in all parts of the country render it perfectly easy for every one to obtain entrance for his children, and the poorest need have no fear that he will be refused admission. Every one, too, must learn. The discipline is exceedingly strict. If a boy is obstinate, or stupid, his hands are tied to a post above his head, and a stalwart mendicant lays on to him with a rattan till the weals stand out like ropes, and the blood trickles down the victim's back. Many a grown-up man can show you the scars he got in the HPONGYEE KYOUNG, because his head was too dense, or his memory too feeble, to get hold of the Pali formulas, which had, and have, not any comprehensible meaning to him. Nevertheless, he bears no malice; on the contrary he is rather proud of it, as being likely to stand greatly to his credit in some future existence, or at any rate as atoning for the obfuscated brains with which he has been endowed in this existence. A Turanian *plagosus Orbilius* is therefore regarded with especial favour, and a Dotheboys Hall would be extensively patronised in Burma, as considerably shortening the way towards NEIKBAN.

The life of the HPONGYEE KYOUNG is about as lazy a round of existence as is to be found anywhere in the world. A few of the monks, seized by a sudden desire to do something, occasionally enter one of the ZAYATS, the rest houses round the pagodas, on a feast day, when there are a number of people gathered together, and read and expound passages of the law to such as care to come and hear them. Occasionally, too, devout laymen will go to the monastery to talk over points of theology, or to ask for elucidation of some passage in a commentary; but there are only a few who are troubled in this way, and unless the monk is an enthusiast, he need never be troubled with doing anything. They learn long passages of Pali ritual and dogma when they are preparing for admission to the Order, and can always rattle it over with surprising glibness when occasion requires. I have never yet, however, met with one who had more than a parrot-like knowledge of the sacred language. There are a few TSADAUS in Mandalay who are said to have a just comprehension of the sacred books, and certainly have most valuable collections of them, but they do not make much use of the learning claimed for them. They spend their time mostly in multiplying copies of Cinghalese commentaries, occasionally adding a note or two of their own, more or less puerile or superstitious, for they never venture to hint at modifications of doctrines. As an almost invariable

rule, the monk is densely ignorant and far below the most ordinary layman in knowledge of every kind. Prompted by the establishment of Government vernacular schools, a few monks in Lower Burma have been induced, by the fear of losing their power over the youth of the country, to learn and commence teaching in their KYOUNGS a small amount of secular learning, and occasionally a little arithmetic. The latter accomplishment, however, is regarded with great suspicion as being cabalistic, and therefore opposed to the regulations of the WINI. It is therefore only in the KYOUNGS, in and near our large towns, where the competition is great, that cyphering enters into the monastic curriculum. Nevertheless, though teaching is all the HPONGYEEES do for the people, and many of them do not even do that, there are no signs that they are losing their power over the Burmese. The public feeling against a want of rectitude in life in a monk is certainly very strong. A mendicant who committed any one of the four cardinal sins, would be forced to leave the Order by the unanimous voice of the people, supposing his abbot did not unfrock him—deprive him of the TSIWAYAN, the yellow monkish robe. As long, however, as he lives an orderly life, no matter how little he does, the veriest drone may be assured that the people will not withhold their alms or respect. From the time when he first ties the PATTÀ, the begging-bowl, round his neck, till the end, when his body is embalmed and burned on a funeral pyre erected at the public expense, he meets with the utmost veneration. The people make way for him when he walks abroad. The oldest layman assumes the title of disciple to the last inducted KOYIN and with clasped hands addresses him as HPAYAH, the highest title the language can afford. The monk's commonest actions—walking, sleeping, eating—are referred to in language different from that which would be used of a layman, or even of the king, performing the same thing. The highest officials bow before them, and impose upon themselves the greatest sacrifices, both of time and money, to build KYOUNGS for them and minister to their wants. Finally the monk's person is sacred and inviolable. There are but two motives for this high veneration. First, the admiration entertained for their austere manners and purely religious mode of life; secondly, the merit and rewards they hope to derive, in a future existence, from the plentiful alms they bestow. Nevertheless to an unprejudiced stranger the HPONGYEEES appear the least deserving of mortals. They spend the entire day sitting cross-legged chewing betel, or lying at full length endeavouring to fall asleep; when they go abroad during the day, it is because they are utterly *ennuyés* with sitting at home doing nothing and cannot find sufficient relief in merely standing up and yawning. But in their incomparable idleness, they are only an apotheosis of their countrymen, and perhaps not a little of the respect paid them is due to a secret admiration for their supreme objection to doing anything at all.

SHWAY, YOE.

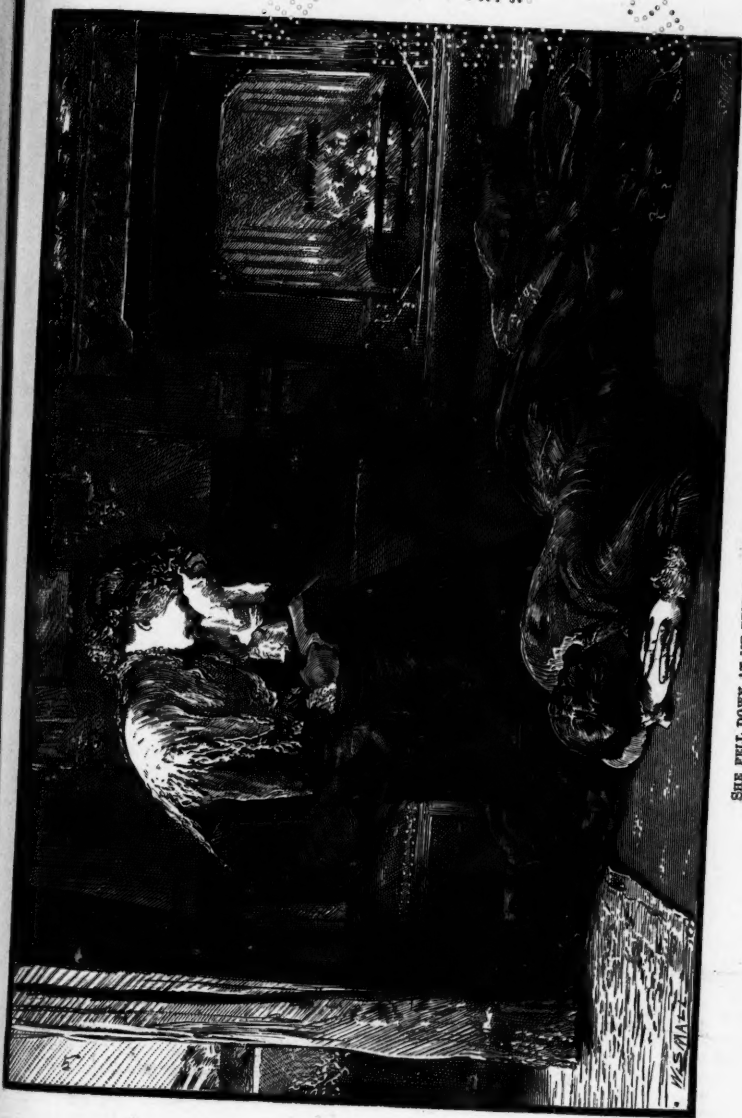
## My Faithful Johnny.

### CHAPTER V.



HAD a long time to wait before Mrs. Harwood came. The morning sun was shining into the room, making everything more dingy. No doubt it had been dusted that morning as well as the little maid could dust it; but nothing looked pure or fresh in the brightness of the light, which was full of motes, and seemed to find out dust in every corner. The dingy cover on the table, the old-fashioned Books of Beauty, the black horsehair chairs, stood out remorselessly shabby in the

sunshine. I wondered what kind of house Ellen would have when she furnished one for herself. Would John and she show any "taste" between them—would they "pick up" pretty things at sales and old furniture shops, or would they buy a drawing-room suite for twenty-five pounds, such as the cheap upholsterers offer to the unwary? This question amused me while I waited, and I was sorry to think that the new household was to be planted in the Levant, and we should not see how it settled itself. There was a good deal of commotion going on overhead, but I did not pay any attention to it. I pleased myself arranging a little home for the new pair—making it pretty for them. Of her own self Ellen would never, I felt sure, choose the drawing-room suite in walnut and blue rep—not now, at least, after she had been so much with us. As for John, he would probably think any curtain tolerable so long as she sate under its shadow. I had been somewhat afraid of confronting the mother, and possibly the father; but these thoughts put my panic out of my head. These horsehair chairs! was there ever such an invention of the evil one? Ellen could not like them; it was impossible. When I had come



SHE FELL DOWN AT MY FEET IN A PASSION OF SORE AND TEARS.



THE  
END  
OF  
THE  
WORLD  
AS  
WE  
KNOW  
IT

this  
for  
star  
not  
eno  
trere  
a st  
was  
exc  
lou  
dro  
mig  
sile  
pau  
the  
qui  
wit  
awa  
I re

spe  
per

quic  
said  
to n

wis  
spee

" In  
dou  
he l  
chee

she  
den  
" Th  
lead  
has.  
beco  
The  
is w  
a yo  
shou



this length my attention was suddenly attracted by the sounds upstairs ; for there came upon the floor over my head the sound of a foot stamped violently in apparent fury. There were voices too ; but I could not make out what they said. As to this sound, however, it was easy enough to make out what it meant : nothing could be more suggestive. I trembled and listened, my thoughts taking an entirely new direction ; a stamp of anger, of rage, and partially of impotence too. Then there was a woman's voice rising loud in remonstrance. The man seemed to exclaim and denounce violently ; the woman protested, growing also louder and louder. I listened with all my might. It was not eaves-dropping ; for she, at least, knew that I was there ; but, listen as I might, I could not make out what they said. After a while there was silence, and I heard Mrs. Harwood's step coming down the stairs. She paused to do something, perhaps to her cap or her eyes, before she opened the door. She was in a flutter of agitation, the flowers in her black cap quivering through all their wires, her eyes moist, though looking at me with a suspicious gaze. She was very much on her guard, very well aware of my motive, determined to give me no encouragement. All this I read in her vigilant eyes.

"Mrs. Harwood, I came to speak to you—I promised to come and speak to you—about Mr. Ridgway, who is a great friend of mine, as perhaps you know."

The poor woman was in great agitation and trouble ; but this only quickened her wits. "I see John Ridgway every day of my life," she said, not without a little dignity. "He might say whatever he pleased to me without asking anybody to speak for him."

"Won't you give your consent to this marriage?" I asked. It seemed wisest to plunge into it at once. "It is my own anxiety that makes me speak. I have always been anxious about it, almost before I knew them."

"There are other things in the world besides marriages," she said. "In this house we have a great deal to think of. My husband—no doubt you heard his voice just now—he is a great sufferer. For years he has been confined to that little room upstairs. That is not a very cheerful life."

Here she made a pause, which I did not attempt to interrupt ; for she had disarmed me by this half-appeal to my sympathy. Then suddenly, with her voice a little shaken and unsteady, she burst forth. "The only company he has is Ellen. What can I do to amuse him—to lead his thoughts off himself? I have as much need of comfort as he has. The only bright thing in the house is Ellen. What would become of us if we were left only the two together all these long days? They are long enough as it is. He has not a very good temper, and he is weary with trouble—who wouldn't be in his case? John Ridgway is a young man with all the world before him. Why can't he wait? Why should he want to take our only comfort away from us?"

Her voice grew shrill and broken ; she began to cry. Poor soul !

I believe she had been arguing with her husband on the other side; but it was a little comfort to her to pour out her own grievances, her alarm and distress, to me. I was silenced. How true it had been what John Ridgway said: How could he, so gentle a man, assert himself in the face of this, and claim Ellen as of chief importance to him? Had not they a prior claim?—was not her duty first to her father and mother? I was put to silence myself. I did not know what to say.

"The only thing is," I said timidly at last, "that I should think it would be a comfort to you to feel that Ellen was settled, that she had a home of her own, and a good husband who would take care of her when—she ought to outlive us all," I added, not knowing how to put it. "And if it were to be always as you say," I went on, getting a little courage, "there would be no marriages, no new homes. We have all had fathers and mothers who had claims upon us. What can it be but a heartbreak to bring up a girl for twenty years and more, and think everything of her, and then see her go away and give her whole heart to some one else, and leave us with a smile on her face?" The idea carried me away—it filled my own heart with a sort of sweet bitterness; for was not my own girl just come to that age and crisis? "Oh! I understand you; I feel with you; I am not unsympathetic. But when one thinks—they must live longer than we; they must have children too, and love as we have loved. You would not like, neither you nor I, if no one cared—if our girls were left out when all the others are loved and courted. You like this good John to be fond of her—to ask you for her. You would not have been pleased if Ellen had just lived on and on here, your daughter and nothing more."

This argument had some weight upon her. She felt the truth of what I said. However hard the after consequences may be, we still must have our "bairn respectit like the lave." But on this point Mrs. Harwood maintained her position on a height of superiority which few ordinary mortals, even when the mothers of attractive girls, can attain. "I have never made any objection," she said, "to his coming in the evening. Sometimes it is rather inconvenient; but I do not oppose his being here every night."

"And you expect him to be content with this all his life?"

"It would be better to say all my life," she replied severely; "no, not even that. As for me, it does not matter much. I am not one to put myself in anybody's way; but all her father's life—which can't be very long now," she added, with a sudden gush of tears. They were so near the surface that they flowed at the slightest touch, and besides, they were a great help to her argument. "I don't think it is too much," she cried, "that she should see her poor father out first. She has been the only one that has cheered him up. She is company to him, which I am not. All his troubles are mine, you see. I feel it when his rheumatism is bad; but Ellen is outside: she can talk and be bright. What should I do without her! What should I do without her! I

should be nothing better than a slave. I am afraid to think of it; and her father—her poor father—it would break his heart; it would kill him. I know that it would kill him," she said.

Here I must acknowledge that I was very wicked. I could not but think in my heart, that it would not be at all a bad thing if Ellen's marriage did kill this unseen father of hers who had tired their patience so long, and who stamped his foot with rage at the idea that the poor girl might get out of his clutches. He was an old man, and he was a great sufferer. Why should he be so anxious to live? And if a sacrifice was necessary, old Mr. Harwood might just as well be the one to make it as those two good young people from whom he was willing to take all the pleasure of their lives. But this of course was a sentiment to which I dared not give utterance. We stood and looked at each other while these thoughts were going through my mind. She felt that she had produced an impression, and was too wise to say anything more to diminish it—while I, for my part, was silenced, and did not know what to say.

"Then they must give in again," I said at last. "They must part; and if she has to spend the rest of her life in giving music lessons, and he go away to lose heart and forget her, and be married by any one who will have him in his despair and loneliness—I hope you will think that a satisfactory conclusion—but I do not. I do not!"

Mrs. Harwood trembled as she looked at me. Was I hard upon her? She shrank aside as if I had given her a blow. "It is not me that will part them," she said. "I have never objected. Often it is very inconvenient—you would not like it yourself if every evening, good or bad, there was a strange man in your house. But I never made any objection. He is welcome to come as long as he likes. It is not me that says a word——"

"Do you want him to throw up his appointment?" I cried, "his means of life."

She looked at me with her face set. I might have noticed, had I chosen, that all the flowers in her cap were shaking and quivering in the shadow cast upon the further wall by the sunshine, but did not care to remark, being angry, this sign of emotion. "If he is so fond of Ellen, he will not mind giving up a chance," she said; "if some one must give in, why should it be Harwood and me?"

After this I left Pleasant Place hurriedly, with a great deal of indignation in my mind. Even then I was not quite sure of my right to be indignant; but I was so. "If some one must give in, why should it be Harwood and me?" I said to myself that John had known what he would encounter, that he had been right in distrusting himself; but he had not been right in trusting me. I had made no stand against the other side. When you come to haggle about it, and to be uncertain which should give in, how painful the complications of life become! To be perfect, renunciation must be without a word; it must be done as if it were the most natural thing in the world. The moment it is discussed

and shifted from one to another, it becomes vulgar, like most things in this universe. This was what I said to myself as I came out into the fresh air and sunshine, out of the little stuffy house. I began to hate it with its dingy carpets and curtains, its horsehair chairs, that shabby, shabby little parlour—how could anybody think of it as home? I can understand a bright little kitchen, with white hearth and floor, with the firelight shining in all the pans and dishes. But this dusty place with its antimacassars——! These thoughts were in my mind when, turning the corner, I met Ellen full in the face, and felt like a traitor, as if I had been speaking ill of her. She looked at me, too, with some surprise. To see me there, coming out of Pleasant Place, startled her. She did not ask me, Where have you been? but her eyes did, with a bewildered gleam.

"Yes; I have been to see your mother," I said; "you are quite right, Ellen. And why? Because I am so much interested; and I wanted to see what mind she was in about your marriage."

"My—marriage: there never was any question of that," she said quickly, with a sudden flush.

"You are just as bad as the others," said I, moved by this new contradiction. "What! after taking that poor young man's devotion for so long, you will let him go away—go alone, break off everything."

Ellen had grown pale as suddenly as she had blushed. "Is that necessary?" she said, alarmed. "Break off everything? I never thought of that. But, indeed, I think it is a mistake. If he goes, we shall have to part, but only—only for a time."

"How can you tell," I cried, being highly excited, "how long he may be there? He may linger out his life there, always thinking about you, and longing for you—unless he gets weary and disgusted, and asks himself what is the use, at the last. Such things have been; and you on your side will linger here, running out and in to your lessons with no longer any heart for them; unable to keep yourself from thinking that everybody is cruel, that life itself is cruel—all because you have not the courage, the spirit——"

She put her hand on mine and squeezed it suddenly, so that she hurt me. "Don't!" she cried; "you don't know; there is nothing, not a word to be said. It is you who are cruel—you who are so kind; so much as to speak of it, when it cannot be! It cannot be—that is the whole matter. It is out of the question. Supposing even that I get to think life cruel, and supposing he should get weary and disgusted. Oh! it was you that said it, you that are so kind. Supposing all that, yet it is impossible; it cannot be; there is nothing more to be said."

"You will see him go away calmly, notwithstanding all."

"Calmly," she said, with a little laugh, "calmly—yes, I suppose that is the word. I will see him go calmly. I shall not make any fuss if that is what you mean."

"Ellen, I do not understand. I never heard you speak like this before."

"You never saw me like this before," she said with a gasp. She was

breathless with a restrained excitement which looked like despair. But when I spoke further, when I would have discussed the matter, she put up her hand and stopped me. There was something in her face, in its fixed expression, which was like the countenance with which her mother had replied to me. It was a startling thought to me that Ellen's soft fresh face, with its pretty bloom, could ever be like that other face surmounted by the black cap and crown of shabby flowers. She turned and walked with me along the road to my own door, but nothing further was said. We went along side by side silent, till we reached my house, when she put out her hand and touched mine suddenly, and said that she was in a hurry and must run away. I went in more disturbed than I can say. She had always been so ready to yield, so cheerful, so soft, independent indeed, but never harsh in her independence. What did this change mean? I felt as if some one to whom I had turned in kindness had met me with a blow. But by-and-by, when I thought better of it, I began to understand Ellen. Had not I said to myself, a few minutes before, that self-renunciation when it had to be, must be done silently without a word? better perhaps that it should be done angrily than with self-demonstration, self-assertion. Ellen had comprehended this; she had perceived that it must not be asked or speculated upon, which was to yield. She had chosen her part, and she would not have it discussed or even remarked. I sat in my window pondering while the bright afternoon went by, looking out upon the distant depths of the blue spring atmosphere, just touched by haze, as the air, however bright, always is in London, seeing the people go by in an endless stream without noticing them, without thinking of them. How rare it is in human affairs that there is not some one who must give up to the others, some one who must sacrifice himself or be sacrificed! And the one to whom this lot falls is always the one who will do it; that is the rule so far as my observation goes. There are some whom nature moves that way, who cannot stand upon their rights, who are touched by the claims of others and can make no stand against them. The tools to those that can handle them, as our philosopher says; and likewise the sacrifices of life to him who will bear them. Refuse them, that is the only way; but if it is not in your nature to refuse them, what can you do? Alas! for sacrifice is seldom blessed. I am saying something which will sound almost impious to many. Human life is built upon it, and social order; yet personally in itself it is seldom blessed; it debases those who accept it; it harms even those who, without wilfully accepting it, have a dim perception that something is being done for them which has no right to be done. It may, perhaps—I cannot tell—bear fruit of happiness in the hearts of those who practise it. I cannot tell. Sacrifices are as often mistaken as other things. Their divineness does not make them wise. Sometimes, looking back, even the celebrant will perceive that his offering had better not have been made.

All this was going sadly through my mind when I perceived that



someone was passing slowly, endeavouring to attract my attention. By this time it was getting towards evening—and as soon as I was fully roused I saw that it was John Ridgway. If I could have avoided him I should have done so, but now it was not possible; I made him a sign to come upstairs. He came into the drawing-room slowly, with none of the eagerness that there had been in his air on the previous day, and it may easily be believed that on my side I was not eager to see him to tell him my story. He came and sat down by me, swinging his stick in his usual absent way, and for a minute neither of us spoke.

"You do not ask me if I have any news for you; you have seen Ellen!"

"No; it is only because I have news on my side. I am not going after all."

"You are not going!"

"You are disappointed," he said, looking at me with a face which was full of interest and sympathy. These are the only words I can use. The disappointment was his, not mine; yet he was more sympathetic with my feeling about it than impressed by his own. "As for me, I don't seem to care. It is better in one way, if it is worse in another. It stops any rise in life; but what do I care for a rise in life? they would never have let me take Ellen. I knew that even before I saw it in your eyes."

"Ellen ought to judge for herself," I said, "and you ought to judge for yourself; you are of full age; you are not boy and girl. No parents have a right to separate you now. And that old man may go on just the same for the next dozen years."

"Did you see him?" John asked. He had a languid, wearied look, scarcely lifting his eyes.

"I saw only her; but I know perfectly well what kind of man he is. He may live for the next twenty years. There is no end to these tyrannical, ill-tempered people; they live for ever. You ought to judge for yourselves. If they had their daughter settled near, coming to them from her own pleasant little home, they would be a great deal happier. You may believe me or not, but I know it. Her visits would be events; they would be proud of her, and tell everybody about her family, and what a good husband she had got, and how he gave her everything she could desire."

"Please God," said John, devoutly; his countenance had brightened in spite of himself. But then he shook his head. "If we had but got as far as that," he said.

"You ought to take it into your own hands," cried I in all the fervour of a revolutionary. "If you sacrifice your happiness to them, it will not do them any good; it will rather do them harm. Are you going now to tell your news——"

He had got up on his feet, and stood vaguely hovering over me with a faint smile upon his face. "She will be pleased," he said; "no advancement, but no separation. I have not much ambition; I think I am happy too."

"Then, if you are all pleased," I cried, with annoyance which I could not restrain, "why did you send me on such an errand? I am the only one that seems to be impatient of the present state of affairs, and it is none of my business. Another time you need not say anything about it to me."

"There will never be a time when we shall not be grateful to you," said John; but even his mild look of appealing reproach did not move me. It is hard to interest yourself in people and find after all that they like their own way best.

---

CHAPTER VI.

He was quite right in thinking Ellen would be pleased. And yet, after it was all over, she was a little wounded and disappointed, which was very natural. She did not want him to go away, but she wanted him to get the advancement all the same. This was foolish, but still it was natural, and just what a woman would feel. She took great pains to explain to us that it was not hesitation about John, nor even any hesitation on the part of John in going—for Ellen had a quick sense of what was desirable and heroic, and would not have wished her lover to appear indifferent about his own advancement, even though she was very thankful and happy that in reality he was so. The reason of the failure was that the firm had sent out a nephew, who was in the office, and had a prior claim. "Of course he had the first chance," Ellen said, with a countenance of great seriousness; "what would be the good of being a relation if he did not have the first chance?" And I assented with all the gravity in the world. But she was disappointed, though she was so glad. There ought not to have been any one in the world who had the preference over John! She carried herself with great dignity for some time afterwards, and with the air of a person superior to the foolish and partial judgments of the world; and yet in her heart how thankful she was! from what an abyss of blank loneliness and weary exertion was her life saved! For now that I knew it a little better I could see how little that was happy was in her home. Her mother insisted that she should have that hour's leisure in the evening. That was all that any one thought of doing for her. It was enough to keep her happy, to keep her hopeful. But without that, how long would Ellen's brave spirit have kept up? Perhaps had she never known John, and that life of infinite tender communion, her natural happy temperament would have struggled on for a long time against all the depressing effects of circumstance, unaided. But to lose is worse than never to have had. If it is.

Better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all,

yet it is at the same time harder to lose that bloom of existence out of your lot, than to have struggled on by mere help of nature without it.

She had been so happy—making so little go such a long way!—that the loss of her little happiness would have been appalling to her. And yet she was dissatisfied that this heartbreak did not come. She had strung herself up to it. It would have been advancement, progress, all that a woman desires for those belonging to her, for John. Sacrificing him for the others, she was half angry not to have it in her power to sacrifice herself to his “rise in life.” I think I understood her, though we never talked on the subject. She was dissatisfied, although she was relieved. We have all known these mingled feelings.

This happened at the beginning of summer; but all its agitations were over before the long, sweet days and endless twilights of the happy season had fully expanded upon us. It seems to me as I grow older that a great deal of the comfort of our lives depends upon summer—upon the weather, let us say, taking it in its most prosaic form. Sometimes, indeed, to the sorrowful the brightness is oppressive; but to all the masses of ordinary mortals who are neither glad nor sad, it is a wonderful matter not to be chilled to the bone; to be able to do their work without thinking of a fire; without having a sensation of cold always in their lives never to be got rid of. Ellen and her lover enjoyed that summer as people who have been under sentence of banishment enjoy their native country and their home.

You may think there is not much beauty in a London suburb to tempt any one: and there is not for those who can retire to the beautiful fresh country when they will, and surround themselves with waving woods and green lawns, or taste the freshness of the mountains or the saltiness of the sea. We, who go away every year in July, pined and longed for the moment of our removal; and my neighbour in the great house which shut out the air from Pleasant Place, panted in her great garden (which she was proud to think was almost unparalleled for growth and shade in London), and declared herself incapable of breathing any longer in such a close and shut-up locality. But the dwellers in Pleasant Place were less exacting. They thought the long suburban road very pleasant. Where it streamed off into little dusty houses covered with brown ivy and dismal trellis work, and where every unfortunate flower was thick with dust, they gazed with a touch of envy at the “gardens,” and felt it to be rural. When my pair of lovers went out for their walk they had not time to go further than to the “Green Man,” a little tavern upon the roadside, where one big old elm tree, which had braved the dust and the frost for more years than any one could recollect, stood out at a corner at the junction of two roads, with a bench round it, where the passing carters and cabmen drank their beer, and a trough for the horses, which made it look “quite in the country” to all the inhabitants of our district. Generally they got as far as that, passing the dusty cottages and the little terrace of new houses. A great and prolonged and most entertaining controversy went on between them as they walked, as to the kind of house in which they should eventually settle down. Ellen, who was not without

a bit of romance in her, of the only kind practicable with her upbringing, entertained a longing for one of the dusty little cottages. She thought, like all inexperienced persons, that in her hands it would not be dusty. She would find means of keeping the ivy green. She would see that the flowers grew sweet and clean, and set blacks and dust alike at defiance. John, for his part, whose lodging was in one of those little houses, preferred the new terrace. It was very new—very like a row of gingerbread houses—but it was very clean, and for the moment bright, not as yet penetrated by the dust. Sometimes I was made the confidante of these interminable, always renewed, always delightful discussions. "They are not dusty yet," Ellen would say, "but how long will it be before they are dusty? whereas with the villas" (they had a great variety of names—Montpellier Villas, Funchal Villas, Mentone Mansions—for the district was supposed to be very mild) "one knows what one has to expect; and if one could not keep the dust and the blacks out with the help of brushes and dusters, what would be the good of one? I should sow mignonette and Virginia stock," she cried, with a firm faith; "low-growing flowers would be sure to thrive. It is only roses (poor roses!) and tall plants that come to harm." John, for his part, dwelt much upon the fact that in the little front parlours of the terrace houses there were shelves for books fitted into a recess. This weighed quite as much with him as the cleanness of the new places. "The villas are too dingy for her," he said, looking admiringly at her fresh face. "She could never endure the little grey, grimy rooms." That was his romance, to think that everything should be shining and bright about her. He was unconscious of the dinginess of the parlour in Ellen's home. It was all irradiated with her presence to him. These discussions, however, all ended in a sigh and a laugh from Ellen herself. "It is all very fine talking," she would say.

And so the summer went on. Alas! and other summers after it. My eldest girl married. My boys went out into the world. Many changes came upon our house. The children began to think it a very undesirable locality. Even Chatty, always the sweetest, sighed for South Kensington, if not for a house in the country and a month in London in the season, which was what the other girls wished for. This common suburban road, far from fashion, far from society—what but their mother's inveterate old-fashionedness and indifference to appearances could have kept them there so long? The great house opposite with the garden had ceased to be. The high wall was gone from Pleasant Place, and instead of it stood a fresh row of little villakins like the Terrace which had once been John Ridgway's admiration. Alas! Ellen's forebodings had been fully realised, and the terrace was as dingy as Montpellier Villas by this time. The whole neighbourhood was changing. Half the good houses in the road—the houses, so to speak, of the aristocracy, which to name was to command respect from all the neighbourhood—had been built out and adorned with large fronts of plate glass and made into shops. Omni-

buses now rolled along the dusty way. The station where they used to stop had been pushed out beyond the "Green Man," which once we had felt to be "quite in the country." Everything was changing; but my pair of lovers did not change. Ellen got other pupils instead of Chatty and her contemporaries who were growing up and beyond her skill, and came out at ten o'clock every morning with as fresh a face as ever, and her little roll of music always in her hand. And every evening, though now he was set down at his lodgings from the omnibus, and no longer passed my window on his way home, John made his pilgrimage of love to Pleasant Place. She kept her youth—the sweet complexion, the dew in her eyes, and the bloom upon her cheek—in a way I could not understand. The long waiting did not seem to try her. She had always his evening visit to look for, and her days were full of occupation. But John, who had naturally a worn look, did not bear the probation so well as Ellen. He grew bald; a general rustiness came over him. He had looked older than he was to begin with; his light locks, his colourless countenance, faded into a look of age. He was very patient—almost more patient than Ellen, who, being of a more vivacious temper, had occasional little outbursts of petulant despair, of which she was greatly ashamed afterwards; but at the same time this prolonged and hopeless waiting had more effect upon him than upon her. Sometimes he would come to see me by himself for the mere pleasure, it seemed to me, though we rarely spoke on the subject, of being understood.

"Is this to go on for ever?" I said. "Is it never to come to an end?"

"It looks like it," said John, somewhat drearily. "We always talk about our little house. I have got three rises since then. I doubt if I shall ever have any more; but we don't seem a bit nearer—" and he ended with a sigh—not of impatience, like those quick sighs mixed up with indignant, abrupt little laughs in which Ellen often gave vent to her feelings—but of weariness and despondency much more hard to bear.

"And the father," I said, "seems not a day nearer the end of his trouble. Poor man, I don't wish him any harm."

This, I fear, was a hypocritical speech, for in my heart I should not have been at all sorry to hear that his "trouble" was coming to an end.

Then for the first time a faint gleam of humour lighted in John's eye. "I am beginning to suspect that he is—better," he said; "stronger at least. I am pretty sure he has no thought of coming to an end."

"All the better," I said; "if he gets well, Ellen will be free."

"He will never get well," said John, falling back into his dejection, "and he will never die."

"Then it will never come to anything. Can you consent to that?" I said.

He made me no reply. He shook his head; whether in dismal acceptance of the situation, whether in protest against it, I cannot tell. This interview filled me with dismay. I spent hours pondering whether, and how, I could interfere. My interference had not been of much use before.



And my children began to laugh when this lingering commonplace little romance was talked of. "My mother's lovers," the boys called them—"My mother's turtle-doves."

The time had almost run on to the length of Jacob's wooing when one day Ellen came to me, not running in, eager and troubled with her secret as of old, but so much more quietly than usual, with such a still and fixed composure about her, that I knew something serious had happened. I sent away as quickly as I could the other people who were in the room, for I need not say that to find me alone was all but an impossibility. I gave Chatty, now a fine, tall girl of twenty, a look, which was enough for her; she always understood better than any one. And when at last we were free I turned to my visitor anxiously. "What is it?" I said. It did not excite her so much as it did me.

She gave a little abstracted smile. "You always see through me," she said. "I thought there was no meaning in my face. It has come at last. He is really going this time, directly, to the Levant. Oh, what a little thing Chatty was when I asked her to look in the atlas for the Levant; and now she is going to be married! "What will you do," she asked abruptly, stopping short to look at me, "when they are all married and you are left alone?"

I had asked myself this question sometimes, and it was not one I liked. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," I said; "the two little ones of all have not so much as thought of marrying yet."

Ellen answered me with a sigh, a quickly drawn impatient breath. "He is to sail in a fortnight," she said. "Things have gone wrong with the nephew. I knew he never could be so good as John; and now John must go in a hurry to set things right. What a good thing that it is all in a hurry! We shall not have time to think."

"You must go with him—you must go with him, Ellen!" I cried.

She turned upon me almost with severity in her tone. "I thought you knew better. I—go with him! Look here," she cried very hurriedly, "don't think I don't face the full consequences—the whole matter. He is tired, tired to death. He will be glad to go—and after—after! If he should find some one else there, I shall never be the one to blame him."

"Ellen! you ought to ask his pardon on your knees—he find some one else! What wrong you do to the faithfulest—the truest—"

"He is the faithfulest," she said; then after a moment, "but I will never blame him. I tell you beforehand. He has been more patient than ever man was."

Did she believe what she was saying? It was very hard to know. The fortnight flew by like a day. The days had been very long before in their monotony, but now these two weeks were like two hours. I never quite knew what passed. John had taken his courage in both hands, and had bearded the father himself in his den; but, so far as I could make out, it was not the father but the mother with her tears who

vanquished him. "When I saw what her life was," he said to me when he took leave of me, "such a life! my mouth was closed. Who am I that I should take away her only comfort from her? We love each other very dearly, it is our happiness, it is the one thing which makes everything else sweet: but perhaps, as Ellen says, there is no duty in it. It is all enjoyment. Her duty is to them; it is her pleasure, she says, her happiness to be with me."

"But—but you have been engaged for years. No doubt it is your happiness—but surely there is duty too."

"She says not. My mind is rather confused. I don't seem to know. Duty, you know, duty is a thing that it is rather hard to do; something one has to raise one's self up to, and carry through with, whether we like it or whether we don't like it. That's her definition; and it seems right—don't you think it is right? But to say that of us would be absurd. It is all pleasure—all delight," his tired eyelids rose a little to show a gleam of emotion, then dropped again with a sigh; "that is her argument; I suppose it is true."

"Then, do you mean to say——" I cried, and stopped short in sheer bewilderment of mind, not knowing what words to use.

"I don't think I mean to say anything. My head is all confused. I don't seem to know. Our feeling is all one wish to be together; only to see one another makes us happy. Can there be duty in that? she says. It seems right, yet sometimes I think it is wrong, though I can't tell how."

I was confused too—I was silenced. I did not know what to say. "It depends," I said, faltering, "it depends upon what you consider the object of life."

"Some people say happiness; but that would not suit Ellen's theory," he said. "Duty—I had an idea myself that duty was easily defined; but it seems it is as difficult as everything is. So far as I can make out," he added, with a faint smile, "I have got no duties at all."

"To be faithful to her," I said, recollecting the strange speech she had made to me.

He almost laughed outright. "Faithful! that is no duty; it is my existence. Do you think I could be unfaithful if I were to try?"

These were almost the last words he said to me. I suppose he satisfied himself that his duty to his employer required him to go away. And Ellen had a feverish desire that he should go away, now that the matter had been broached a second time. I am not sure that when the possibility of sacrifice on his part dawned upon her, the chance that he might relinquish for her this renewed chance of rising in the world, there did not arise in her mind a hasty impatient wish that he might be unfaithful, and give her up altogether. Sometimes the impatience of a tired spirit will take this form. Ellen was very proud; by dint of having made sacrifices all her life, she had an impetuous terror of being in her turn the object for which sacrifices should be made. To accept them was bitterness to her. She was eager to hurry all his preparations,

to  
ti  
an  
sh  
lan  
it  
as  
of  
as  
rel  
the  
sou  
wer  
us,  
of h  
to t  
son  
the  
men  
beh  
the  
nqu  
ever  
ful,  
his f  
and  
hims  
back  
hims  
Whet  
them  
natur  
he th  
tender  
may n  
as the  
song b  
a—  
up an  
could n  
she th  
aiting.  
nonsen  
An

to get him despatched, if possible, a little earlier than the necessary time. She kept a cheerful face, making little jokes about the Levant and the people he would meet there, which surprised everybody. "Is she glad that he is going?" Chatty asked me, with eyes like two round lamps of alarmed surprise. The last night of all they spent with us—and it seemed a relief to Ellen that it should be thus spent, and not *tête-à-tête* as so many other evenings had been. It was the very height and flush of summer, an evening which would not sink into darkness and night as other evenings do. The moon was up long before the sun had gone reluctantly away. We sat without the lamp in the soft twilight, with the stream of wayfarers going past the windows, and all the familiar sounds, which were not vulgar to us, we were so used to them. They were both glad of the half light. When I told Ellen to go and sing to us, she refused at first with a look of reproach; then, with a little shake of her head, as if to throw off all weakness, changed her mind and went to the piano. It was Chatty who insisted upon Mr. Ridgway's favourite song, perhaps out of heedlessness, perhaps with that curious propensity the young often have to probe wounds, and investigate how deep a sentiment may go. We sat in the larger room, John and myself, while behind, in the dim evening, in the distance, scarcely visible, Ellen sat at the piano and sang. What the effort cost her I would not venture to enquire. As for him, he sat with a melancholy composure listening to every tone of her voice. She had a very sweet refined voice—not powerful, but tender, what people call sympathetic. I could not distinguish his face, but I saw his hand beat the measure accompanying every line, and when she came to the burden of the song, he said it over softly to himself. Broken by all the babble outside, and by the music in the background, I yet heard him, all tuneless and low, murmuring this to himself—"I will come again, I will come again, my sweet and bonnie." Whether his eyes were dry I cannot tell, but mine were wet. He said them with no excitement, as if they were the words most simple, most natural—the very breathing of his heart. How often, I wonder, would he think of that dim room, the half-seen companions, the sweet and tender voice rising out of the twilight? I said to myself, "Whoever may mistrust you, I will never mistrust you," with fervour. But just as the words passed through my mind, as if Ellen had heard them, her song broke off all in a moment, died away in the last line, "I will come a——" There was a sudden break, a jar on the piano—and she sprang up and came towards us, stumbling, with her hands put out, as if she could not see. The next sound I heard was an unsteady little laugh, as she threw herself down on a sofa in the corner where Chatty was sitting. "I wonder why you are all so fond of that old-fashioned nonsense," she said.

And next day the last farewells were said, and John went away.

## CHAPTER VII.

WE left town directly after this for the autumn holidays. The holidays had not very much meaning now that all the boys had left school, and we might have gone away when we pleased. But the two youngest girls were still in the remorseless hands of Fraulein Stimme, and the habit of emancipation in the regular holiday season had clung to me. I tried very hard to get Ellen to go with us, for at least a day or two, but she resisted with a kind of passion. Her mother, I am sure, would have been glad had she gone; but Ellen would not. There was in her face a secret protestation, of which she was perhaps not even herself aware, that if her duty bound life itself from all expansion, it must also bind her in every day of her life. She would not accept the small alleviation, having, with her eyes open and with a full sense of what she was about, resigned everything else. She would have been more perfect, and her sacrifice more sweet, had she taken sweetly the little consolations of every day; but nobody is perfect, and Ellen would not come. I had gone to Pleasant Place to ask her, and the scene was a curious one. The mother and daughter both came to the parlour to receive me, and I saw them together for the first time. It was about a fortnight after John went away. Ellen had not been ill, though I had feared she would; but she was pale, with dark lines under her eyes, and a worn and nervous look. She was bearing her burden very bravely, but it was all the harder upon her that she was evidently determined not to complain. When I told my errand, Mrs. Harwood replied eagerly, "You must go, Ellen. Oh, yes! I can do; I can do very well. It will only be for a week, and it will do you so much good; you must go." Ellen took scarcely any notice of this address. She thanked me with her usual smile. "It is very, very good of you—you are always good—but it is impossible." "Why impossible, why impossible?" cried her mother. "When I tell you I can do very well—I can manage. Your father will not mind, when it is to do you good." I saw that Ellen required a moment's interval of preparation before she looked round.

"Dear mother," she said, "we have not any make-believes between us, have we? How is it possible that I can go? every moment is mapped out. No, no; I cannot do it. Thank you all the same. My mother wants to give me a pleasure, but it cannot be. Go away for a week! I have never done that in all my life."

"But you think she can, you think she ought," I said, turning to her mother. The poor woman looked at her child with a piteous look. I think it dawned upon her, then and there, for the first time, that perhaps she had made a mistake about Ellen. It had not occurred to her that there had been any selfishness in her tearful sense of the impossibility of parting with her daughter. All at once, in a moment, with a sudden gleam of that enlightenment which so often comes too late, she saw it.

She saw it, and it went through her like an arrow. She turned to me with another piteous glance. What have I done, what have I done? her look seemed to say.

"Two or three days," the poor woman said, with a melancholy attempt at playfulness. "Nothing can happen to us in that time. Her father is ill," she said, turning to me as if I knew nothing, "and we are always anxious. She thinks it will be too much for me, by myself. But what does it matter for a few days? If I am overdone, I can rest when she comes back."

Was it possible she could suppose that this was all I knew? I was afraid to catch Ellen's eye. I did not know what might come after such a speech. She might break forth with some sudden revelation of all that I felt sure must be in her heart. I closed my eyes instinctively, sick with terror. That moment I heard Ellen's clear, agreeable voice.

"I don't want you to be overdone, mother. What is the use of all that is past and gone, if I am to take holidays and run away when I like for two or three days? No, no; my place is here, and here I must stay. I don't want you to be overdone."

And looking at her, I saw that she smiled. But her mother's face was full of trouble. She looked from Ellen to me, and from me to Ellen. For everything there is a beginning. Did she only then for the first time perceive what had been done?

However, after this there was nothing more to say. We did not see Ellen again till the days were short, and the brilliant weather over. She changed very much during that winter. Her youth, which had bloomed on so long unaltered, seemed to leave her in a day. When we came back, from looking twenty she suddenly looked thirty-five. The bloom went from her cheeks. She was as trim as ever, and as lightfooted, going out alert and bright every morning to her lessons; but her pretty little figure had shrunk, and her very step on the pavement sounded different. Life and all its hopes and anticipations seemed to have ebbed away from her. I don't doubt that many of her neighbours had been going on in their dull routine of life without knowing any of those hopes or prospects, all this time by Ellen's side, and fulfilled their round of duties without any such diversions. Oh, the mystery of these myriads of humble lives, which are never enlivened even by a romance *manqué*, a story that might have been; that steal away from dull youth to dull age, never knowing anything but the day's work, never coming to anything! But Ellen had known a something different, a life that was her own; and now she had lost it. The effect was great; how could it be otherwise? She lost herself altogether for a little while, and when she came to again, as all worthy souls must come, she was another Ellen; older than her age as the other had been younger, and prepared for everything. No longer trying to evade suffering; rather desirous, if that might be, to forestall it, to discount it—if I may use the word—before it was due, and know the



worst. She never told me this in words, but I felt that it was so. It is not only in a shipwreck that the unfortunate on the verge of death plunge in to get it over a few hours, a few minutes, sooner. In life there are many shipwrecks which we would forestall, if we could, in the same way, by a plunge—by a voluntary putting on of the decisive moment. Some, I suppose, will put it off by every expedient that despair can suggest; but there are also those who can bear anything but to wait until slowly, surely, the catastrophe comes. Ellen wanted to make the plunge, to get it over, partly for John's sake, whose infidelity she began to calculate upon—to (she believed) wish for. "He will never be able to live without a home to go to, without a woman to speak to, now," she said once, in a moment of incaution—for she was very guarded, very reticent, about all this part of her mind, and rarely betrayed herself. It is curious how little faith women in general, even the most tender, have in a man's constancy. Either it is because of an inherent want of trust in their own power to secure affection, which might be called humility; or else it is quite the reverse—a pride of sex too subtle to show, in any conscious way, overweening confidence in the power over a man of any other woman who happens to be near him, and want of confidence in any power on his part to resist these fascinations. Ellen had made up her mind that her lover when he was absent from her would be, as she would have said, "like all the rest." Perhaps, in a kind of wild generosity, she wished it, feeling that she herself never might be free to make him happy; but, anyhow, she was persuaded that this was how it would be. She looked out for signs of it in his very first letter. She wanted to have it over—to cut off remorselessly out of her altered being all the agitations of hope.

But I need not say that John's letters were everything a lover's or rather a husband's letters should be. They were more like a husband's letters, with very few protestations in them, but a gentle continued reference to her, and to their past life together, which was more touching than any rhapsodies. She brought them to me often, folding down, with a blush which made her look like the blooming Ellen of old, some corner of especial tenderness, something that was too sacred for a stranger's eye, but always putting them back in her pocket with a word which sounded almost like a grudge, as who should say, "For this once all is well, but next time you shall see." Thus she held on to her happiness as by a strained thread, expecting every moment when it would snap, and defying it to do so, yet throbbing all the time with a passion of anxiety, as day after day it held out, proving her foreboding vain. That winter, though I constantly saw her, my mind was taken up by other things than Ellen. It was then that the children finally prevailed upon me to leave the Road. A row of cheap advertising shops had sprung up facing us where had been the great garden I have so often mentioned, and the noise and flaring lights were more than I could put up with, after all my resistance to their wishes. So that at last, to my great

regret, but the exultation of the young ones, it was decided that we must go away.

The removal, and the bustle there was, the change of furniture,—for our old things would not do for the new house and Chatty, Heaven save us! had grown artistic, and even the little ones and Fräulein Stimme knew a great deal better than I did—occupied my mind and my time; and it took a still longer time to settle down than it did to tear up our old roots. So that there was a long interval during which we saw little of Ellen; and though we never forgot her, or ceased to take an interest in everything that concerned her, the distance of itself threw us apart. Now and then she paid us a visit, always with John's letter in her pocket, but her time was so limited that she never could stay long. And sometimes I, and sometimes Chatty, made a pilgrimage to the old district to see her. But we never could have an uninterrupted long talk in Pleasant Place. Either Ellen was called away, or Mrs. Harwood would come in and sit down with her work, always anxiously watching her daughter. This separation from the only people to whom she could talk of her own private and intimate concerns was a further narrowing and limitation of poor Ellen's life. But what could I do? I could not vex my children for her sake. She told us that she went and looked at the old house almost every day, and at the square window in which I used to sit and see John pass. John passed no longer, nor was I there to see. But Ellen remained bound in the same spot, seeing everything desert her—love, and friendship, and sympathy, and all her youth and her hope. Can you not fancy with what thoughts this poor girl (though she was a girl no longer) would pause, as she passed, to look at the abandoned place so woven in with the brightest episode of her life, feeling herself stranded there, impotent, unable to make a step—her breast still heaving with all the vigour of existence, yet her life bound down in the narrowest contracted circle? Her mother, who had got to watch her narrowly, told me afterwards that she always knew when Ellen had passed No. 16; and indeed I myself was rather glad to hear that at length No. 16 had shared the general fate, that my window existed no longer, and that a great shop with plate-glass windows was bulging out where our house had been. Better when a place is desecrated that it should be desecrated wholly, and have no vestige of its old self at all.

Thus more than a year glided away, spring and winter, summer and autumn, and then winter again. Chatty came in one November morning, when London was half invisible, wrapped in mist and fog, with a very grave face, to tell me that she had met Ellen, and Ellen had told her there was bad news from John. "I can't understand her," Chatty said. "I couldn't make out what it was; that business had been bad, and things had gone wrong; and then something with a sort of laugh that he had got other thoughts in his mind at last, as she knew all along he would, and that she was glad. What could she mean?" I did not know

what she could mean, but I resolved to go and see Ellen to ascertain what the change was. It is easier, however, to say than to do when one is full of one's own affairs, and so it happened that for a full week, though intending to go every day, I never did so. It was partly my fault. The family affairs were many, and the family interests engrossing. It was not that I cared for Ellen less, but my own claimed me on every hand. When one afternoon, about a fortnight after, I was told that Miss Harwood was in the drawing-room and wished to speak to me, my heart upbraided me with my neglect. I hurried to her and led her away from that public place where everybody came and went, to my own little sitting-room, where we might be alone. Ellen was very pale; her eyes looked very dry and bright, not dewy and soft as they used to be. There was a feverish look of unrest and excitement about her. "There is something wrong," I cried. "What is it? Chatty told me—something about John."

"I don't know that it is anything wrong," she said. The smile that had frightened Chatty came over her face—a smile that made one unhappy, the lip drawn tightly over the teeth in the most ghastly mockery of amusement. "No; I don't know that it is anything wrong. You know I always expected—always, from the moment he went away—that between him and me things would soon be at an end. Oh, yes, I expected it, and I did not wish it otherwise; for what good is it to me that a man should be engaged to me, and waste his life for me, when I never could do anything for him?"

Here she made a little breathless pause, and laughed. "Oh, don't, Ellen, don't!" I cried. I could not bear the laugh; the smile was bad enough.

"Why not?" she said, with a little defiance; "would you have me cry? I expected it long ago. The wonder is that it should have been so long of coming. That is," she cried suddenly after a pause, "that is if this is really what it means. I took it for granted at first; but I cannot be certain. I cannot be certain! Read it, you who know him, and tell me, tell me! Oh, I can bear it quite well. I should be rather glad if this is what it means."

She thrust a letter into my hand, and, going away with a rapid step to the window, stood there with her back to me, looking out. I saw her standing against the light, playing restlessly with the tassel of the blind. In her desire to seem composed, or else in the mere excitement which boiled in her veins, she began to hum a tune. I don't think she knew herself what it was.

The letter which she professed to have taken so easily was worn with much reading, and it had been carried about, folded and refolded a hundred times. There was no sign of indifference in all that—and this is what it said:—

"I got your last letter, dear Ellen, on Tuesday. I think you must have written in low spirits. Perhaps you had a feeling, such as we used

to talk about, of what was happening here. As for me, nobody could be in lower spirits than this leaves me. I have lost heart altogether. Everything has gone wrong; the business is at an end: I shut up the office to-day. If it is in any way my fault, God forgive me! But the conflict in my heart has been so great that I sometimes fear it must be my fault. I had been low enough before, thinking and thinking how the end was to come between you and me. Everything has gone wrong inside and out. I had such confidence, and now it is all going. What I had most faith in has deceived me. I thought I never was the man to change or to fail, and that I could have trusted myself in any circumstances; but it does not seem so. And why should I keep you hanging on when all's wrong with me? I always thought I could redeem it; but it hasn't proved so. You must just give me up, Ellen, as a bad job. Sometimes I have thought you wished it. Where I am to drift to, I can't tell; but there's no prospect of drifting back, or, what I hoped for, sailing back in prosperity to you. You have seen it coming, I can see by your letters, and I think, perhaps, though it seems strange to say so, that you won't mind. I shall not stay here; but I have not made up my mind where to go. Forget a poor fellow that was never worthy to be yours.—JOHN RIDGWAY."

My hands dropped with the letter in them. The rustle it made was the only sign she could have had that I had read it, or else instinct or inward vision. That instant she turned upon me from the window with a cry of wild suspense: "Well?"

"I am confounded. I don't know what to think. Ellen, it looks more like guilt to the office than falsehood to you."

"Guilt—to the office!" Her face blazed up at once in scorching colour. She looked at me in fierce resentment and excitement, stamping her foot. "Guilt—to the office! How dare you? How dare you?" she cried like a fury. She clenched her hands at me, and looked as if she could have torn me in pieces. "Whatever he has done," she cried, "he has done nothing he had not a right to do. Do you know who you are speaking of? John! You might as well tell me I had broken into your house at night and robbed you. *He* have anything to blame himself for with the office?—never! nor with any one. What he has done is what he had a right to do—I am the first to say so. He has been wearied out. You said it once yourself, long, long before my eyes were opened; and at last he has done it—and he had a good right!" She stood for one moment before me in the fervour of this fiery address; then, suddenly, she sank and dropped on her knees by my side. "You think it means that? You see it?—don't you see it? He has grown weary, as was so natural. He thought he could trust himself; but it proved different; and then he thought he could redeem it. What can that mean but one thing?—he has got some one else to care for him. There is nothing wrong in that. It is not I that will ever blame him. The only thing was that a horrible doubt came over me this morning—if it

should not mean what I thought it did! That is folly, I know; but you, who know him, put away all that nonsense about wrong to the office, which is out of the question, and you will see it cannot be anything but one thing."

"It is not that," I said.

She clasped her hands, kneeling by my side. "You always took his part," she said in a low voice. "You will not see it." Why did she tremble so? Did she want to believe it, or not to believe it? I could not understand Ellen. Just then, from the room below, there came a voice singing. It was Chatty's voice, the child whom she had taught, who had been the witness of their wooing. She knew nothing about all this; she did not even know that Ellen was in the house. What so natural as that she should sing the song her mistress had taught her? It was that which Ellen herself had been humming as she stood at the window.

"Listen!" I said. "You are answered in his own words—'I will come again.'"

This was more than Ellen could bear. She made one effort to rise to her feet, to regain her composure; but the music was too much. At that moment I myself felt it too much. She fell down at my feet in a passion of sobs and tears.

Afterwards I knew the meaning of Ellen's passionate determination to admit no meaning but one to the letter. She had taken him at his word. In her certainty that this was to happen, she had seen no other interpretation to it, until it was too late. She had never sent any reply; and he had not written again. It was now a month since the letter had been received, and this sudden breaking off of the correspondence had been so far final on both sides. To satisfy myself, I sent to inquire at the office, and found that no blame was attached to John; but that he had been much depressed, unduly depressed, by his failure to remedy the faults of his predecessor, and had left as soon as his accounts were forwarded and all the business details carefully wound up, and had not been heard of more. I compelled, I may say, Ellen to write, now that it was too late; but her letter was returned to her some time after. He had left the place, and nothing of him was known.

---

#### CHAPTER VIII.

THIS little tragedy, as it appeared to me, made a great impression on my mind. It did not make me ill; that would have been absurd. But still it helped, I suppose, to depress me generally and enhance the effect of the cold that had hung about me so long, and for which the elder ones, taking counsel together, decided that the desire of the younger ones should be gratified, and I should be made to go to Italy for the spring. The girls were wild to go, and my long-continued lingering cold was such a good



excuse. For my own part, I was quite unwilling; but what can one woman, especially when she is their mother, do against so many? I had to give in and go. I went to see Ellen before we started, and it was a very painful visit. She was still keeping up with a certain defiance of everybody. But in the last two months she had changed wonderfully. For one thing, she had shrunk into half her size. She was never anything but a little woman; but now she seemed to me no bigger than a child. And those cheerful, happy brown eyes, which had so triumphed over and smiled at all the privations of life, looked out from two hollow caverns, twice as large as they had ever been before, and with a woeful look that broke one's heart. It was not always that they had this woeful look. When she was conscious of inspection she played them about with an artificial activity as if they had been lanterns, forcing a smile into them which sometimes looked almost like a sneer; but when she forgot that any one was looking at her, then both smile and light went out, and there was in them a woeful doubt and question which nothing could solve. Had she been wrong? Had she misjudged him whom her heart could not forget or relinquish? Was it likely that she could give him up lightly even had he been proved unworthy? And, oh, Heaven! was he proved unworthy, or had she done him wrong? This was what Ellen was asking herself, without intermission, for ever and ever; and her mother, on her side, watched Ellen piteously with much the same question in her eyes. Had she, too, made a mistake? Was it possible that she had exacted a sacrifice which she had no right to exact, and in mere cowardice, and fear of loneliness, and desire for love and succour on her own part, spoiled two lives? This question, which was almost identical in both, made the mother and daughter singularly like each other; except that Ellen kept asking her question of the air, which is so full of human sighs, and the sky, whither so many ungranted wishes go up, and the darkness of space, in which is no reply—and the mother asked hers of Ellen, interrogating her mutely all day long, and of every friend of Ellen's who could throw any light upon the question. She stole into the room when Ellen left me for a moment, and whispered, coming close to me, lest the very walls should hear—

"How do you think she is looking? She will not say a word to me about him—not a word. Don't you think she has been too hasty? Oh! I would give everything I have if she would only go with you and look for John, and make it up with him again."

"I thought you could not spare her," I said, with perhaps some cruelty in my intention. She wrung her hands, and looked piteously in my face.

"You think it is all my fault! I never thought it would come to this; I never thought he would go away. Oh, if I had only let them marry at first! I often think if she had been happy in her own house, coming to see her father every day, it would have been more of a change for him, more company than having her always. Oh! if one could only

tell what is going to happen. She might have had a nice family by this time, and the eldest little girl big enough to run in and play at his feet and amuse her grandpa. He always was fond of children. But we'll never see Ellen's children now!" cried the poor woman. "And you think it is my fault!"

I could not reproach her; her black cap with the flowers, her little woollen shawl about her shoulders, grew tragic as she poured forth her trouble. It was not so dignified as the poet's picture, but yet, like him, she

Saw the unborn faces shine  
Beside the never lighted fire;

and with a groan of misery felt herself the slayer of those innocents that had never been. The tragic and the comic mingled in the vision of that "eldest little girl," the child who would have amused her grandpa had she been permitted to come into being; but it was all tragic to poor Mrs. Harwood. She saw no laugh, no smile, in the situation anywhere.

We went to Mentone, and stayed there till the bitterness of the winter was over, then moved along that delightful coast, and were in Genoa in April. To speak of that stately city as a commercial town seems insulting nowadays—and yet so it is. I recognised at once the type I had known in other days when I sat at the window of the hotel and watched the people coming and going. It reminded me of my window in the Road, where, looking out, I saw the respectable City people—clerks like John Ridgway, and merchants of the same cut though of more substantial comfort—wending their way to their business in the morning, and to their suburban homes in the evening. I do not know that I love the commercial world; but I like to see that natural order of life, the man "going out to his work and labour till the evening." The fashion of it is different in a foreign town, but still the life is the same. We changed our quarters, however, after we had been for some time in that city, so-called of palaces, and were lodged in a suite of rooms very hard to get up to (though the staircase was marble), but very delightful when one was there; rooms which overlooked the high terrace which runs round a portion of the bay between the inns and the quays. I forget what it is called. It is a beautiful promenade, commanding the loveliest view of that most beautiful bay and all that is going on in it. At night, with all its twinkling semicircle of lights, it was a continual enchantment to me; but this or any of my private admirations are not much to the purpose of my story. Sitting at the window, always my favourite post, I became acquainted with various individual figures among those who haunted this terrace. Old gentlemen going out to sun themselves in the morning before the heat was too great; children and nursemaids, Genoese women with their pretty veils, invalids who had got up the stairs, I cannot tell how, and sat panting on the benches, enjoying the sea air and the sunshine. There was one, however, among this panorama of passing figures, which gave me a startled sense of familiarity. It was

too far off to see the man's face. He was not an invalid; but he was bent, either with past sickness or with present care, and walked with a drooping head and a languid step. After watching him for a time, I concluded (having always a great weakness for making out other people's lives, how they flow) that he had some occupation in the town from which he escaped, whenever he had leisure, to rest a little and refresh himself upon the terrace. He came very regularly, just at the time when Italian shops and offices have a way of shutting up, in the middle of the day, very regularly, always, or almost always, at the same hour. He came up the steps slowly and languidly, stopped a little to take breath, and then walked half way round the terrace to a certain bench upon which he always seated himself. Sometimes he brought his luncheon with him and ate it there. At other times, having once gained that place, he sat quite still in a corner of it, not reading, nor taking any notice of the other passers-by. No one was with him, no one ever spoke to him. When I noticed him first he startled me. Who was he like? His bent figure, his languid step, was like no one I could think of; but yet I said to myself, He is like somebody. I established a little friendship with him, though it was a friendship without any return; for though I could see him he could not see me, nor could I distinguish his face; and we never saw him anywhere else, neither at church, nor in the streets, not even on the *festas* when everybody was about; but always just there on that one spot. I looked for him as regularly as the day came. "My mother's old gentleman," Chatty called him. Everybody is old who is not young to these children; but though he was not young he did not seem to me to be old. And he puzzled as much as he interested me. Who was he like? I never even asked myself, Who was he? He was nobody I had any way of knowing. Some poor *employé* in a Genoa office; how should I know him? I could not feel at all sure, when I was cross-examined on the subject, whether I really remembered any one whom he was like; but yet he had startled me more than I can say.

Genoa, where we had friends and family reasons for staying, became very hot as the spring advanced into early summer, and we removed to one of the lovely little towns on the coast at a little distance, Santa Margherita. When we had been settled there for a few days, Chatty came in to me one evening with a pale face. "I have just seen your old gentleman," she said. "I think he must live out here;" but I saw by the expression of her eyes that there was more to say. She added after a moment, "And I know who he is like."

"Ah! you have seen his face," I said; and then, before she had spoken, it suddenly flashed on myself in a moment, "John Ridgway!" I cried.

"Mother," said Chatty, quite pale, "I think it is his ghost."

I went out with her instantly to where she had seen him, and we made some inquiries, but with no success. When I began to think it

over, he was not like John Ridgway. He was bent and stooping, whereas John was erect; his head drooped, whereas how well I recollected poor John's head thrown back a little, his hat upon the back of it, his visionary outlook rather to the skies than to the ground. No, no, not like him a bit; but yet it might be his ghost, as Chatty said. We made a great many inquiries, but for the moment with no success, and you may suppose that I watched the passers-by from my window with more devotion than ever. One evening in the sudden nightfall of the Italian skies, when darkness comes all at once, I was seated in my usual place, scarcely seeing, however, the moving figures outside, though all the population of the place seemed to be out, sitting round the doors, and strolling leisurely along enjoying the heavenly coolness and the breeze from the sea. At the further end of the room Chatty was at the piano, playing to me softly in the dark as she knows I like to be played to, and now and then striking into some old song such as I love. She was sure to arrive sooner or later at that one with which we now had so many associations; but I was not thinking of that, nor for the moment of Ellen or her faithful (as I was sure he was still) lover at all. A woman with so many children has always plenty to think of. My mind was busy with my own affairs. The windows were open, and the babble of the voices outside—high-pitched, resounding Italian voices, not like the murmur of English—came in to us as the music floated out. All at once, I suddenly woke up from my thinking and my family concerns. In the dusk one figure detached itself from among the others with a start, and came forward slowly with bent head and languid step. Had he never heard that song since he heard Ellen break off, choked with tears unshed, and a despair which had never been revealed? He came quite close under the window where I could see him no longer. I could not see him at all; it was too dark. I divined him. Who could it be but he? Not like John Ridgway, and yet John; his ghost, as Chatty had said.

I did not stop to think what I was to do, but rose up in the dark room where the child was singing, only a voice, herself invisible in the gloom. I don't know whether Chatty saw me go; but, if so, she was inspired unawares by the occasion, and went on with her song. I ran downstairs and went out softly to the open door of the inn, where there were other people standing about. Then I saw him quite plainly by the light from a lower window. His head was slightly raised towards the place from which the song came. He was very pale in that pale doubtful light, worn and old and sad; but, as he looked up, a strange illumination was on his face. His hand beat the air softly, keeping time. As she came to the refrain his lips began to move as if he were repeating after his old habit those words, "I will come again." Then a sudden cloud of pain seemed to come over his face—he shook his head faintly, then bowed it upon his breast.

In a moment I had him by the arm. "John," I said, in my excite-

ment; "John Ridgway! we have found you." For the moment, I believe, he thought it was Ellen who had touched him; his white face seemed to leap into light; then paled again. He took off his hat with his old formal somewhat shy politeness—"I thought it must be you, madame," he said. He said "madame" instead of the old English *ma'am*, which he had always used—this little concession to the changed scene was all the difference. He made no mystery about himself, and showed no reluctance to come in with me, to talk as of old. He told me he had a situation in an office in Genoa, and that his health was bad. "After that *fiasco* in the Levant, I had not much heart for anything. I took the first thing that was offered," he said, with his old vague smile; "for a man must live—till he dies." "There must be no question of dying—at your age," I cried. This time his smile almost came the length of a momentary laugh. He shook his head, but he did not continue the subject. He was very silent for some time after. Indeed, he said nothing, except in reply to my questions, till Chatty left the room, and we were alone. Then all at once, in the middle of something I was saying—"Is she—married again?" he said.

"Married—again!"

"It is a foolish question. She was not married to me; but it felt much the same; we had been as one for so long. There must have been some—strong inducement—to make her cast me off so at the end."

This he said in a musing tone, as if the fact were so certain, and had been turned over in his mind so often that all excitement was gone from it. But after it was said, a gleam of anxiety came into his half-veiled eyes. He raised his heavy, tired eyelids and looked at me. Though he seemed to know all about it, and to be resigned to it when he began to speak, yet it seemed to flash across him, before he ended, that there was an uncertainty—an answer to come from me which would settle it, after all. Then he leaned forward a little, in this sudden sense of suspense, and put his hand to his ear as if he had been deaf, and said "What?" in an altered tone.

"There is some terrible mistake," I said. "I have felt there was a mistake all along. She has lost her hold on life altogether because she believes you to be changed."

"Changed!" His voice was quite sharp and keen, and had lost its languid tone. "In what way—in what way? how could I be changed?"

"In the only way that could matter between her and you. She thought, before you left the Levant, that you had got to care for some one else—that you had ceased to care for her. Your letter," I said, "your letter!"—half frightened by the way in which he rose, and his threatening, angry aspect—"would bear that interpretation."

"My letter!" He stood before me for a moment with a sort of feverish, fierce energy; then he began to laugh, low and bitterly, and walk about as if unable to keep still. "My letter!" The room was scarcely lighted—one lamp upon the table, and no more; and the half-



darkness, as he paced about, made his appearance more threatening still. Then he suddenly came and stood before me as if it had been I that had wronged him. "I am a likely man to be a gay Lothario," he cried, with that laugh of mingled mockery and despair which was far more tragical than weeping. It was the only expression that such an extreme of feeling could find. He might have cried out to heaven and earth, and groaned and wept; but it would not have expressed to me the wild confusion, the overturn of everything, the despair of being so misunderstood, the miserable sum of suffering endured and life wasted for nothing, like this laugh. Then he dropped again into the chair opposite me, as if with the consciousness that even this excitement was vain.

"What can I say? What can I do? Has she never known me all along?—Ellen!" He had not named her till now. Was it a renewal of life in his heart that made him capable of uttering her name?

"Do not blame her," I cried. "She had made up her mind that nothing could ever come of it, and that you ought to be set free. She thought of nothing else but this; that for her all change was hopeless—that she was bound for life; and that you should be free. It became a fixed idea with her; and when your letter came, which was capable of being misread—"

"Then the wish was father to the thought," he said, still bitterly. "Did she show it to you? did you misread it also? Poor cheat of a letter! My heart had failed me altogether. Between my failure and her slavery—. But I never thought she would take me at my word," he went on piteously, "never! I wrote, don't you know, as one writes longing to be comforted, to be told it did not matter so long as we loved each other, to be bidden come home. And there never came a word—not a word."

"She wrote afterwards, but you were gone; and her letter was returned to her."

"Ah!" he said, in a sort of desolate assent. "Ah! was it so? then that was how it had to be, I suppose; things were so settled before ever we met each other. Can you understand that?—all settled that it was to end just so in misery, and confusion, and folly, before even we met."

"I do not believe it," I cried. "There is no need that it should end so, even now; if—if you are unchanged still."

"I—changed?" He laughed at this once more, but not so tragically, with sham ridicule of the foolishness of the doubt. And then all of a sudden he began to sing—oh, it was not a beautiful performance! he had no voice, and not much ear; but never has the loveliest of music moved me more—"I will come again, my sweet and bonnie; I will come—" Here he broke down as Ellen had done, and said, with a hysterical sob, "I'm ill; I think I'm dying. How am I, a broken man, without a penny, to come again?"

Chatty and I walked with him to his room through the soft darkness of the Italian night. I found he had fever—the wasting, exhausting

ague fever—which haunts the most beautiful coasts in the world. I did my best to reassure him, telling him that it was not deadly, and that at home he would soon be well; but I cannot say that I felt so cheerfully as I spoke, and all that John did was to shake his head. As we turned home again through all the groups of cheerful people, Chatty with her arm looped in mine, we talked, it is needless to say, of nothing else. But not even to my child did I say what I meant to do. I am not rich, but still I can afford myself a luxury now and then. When the children were in bed I wrote a short letter, and put a cheque in it for twenty pounds. This was what I said. I was too much excited to write just in the ordinary way:—

“Ellen, I have found John, ill, heartbroken, but as faithful and unchanged as I always knew he was. If you have the heart of a mouse in you come out instantly—don’t lose a day—and save him. It may be time yet. If he can be got home to English air and to happiness it will still be time.

“I have written to your mother. She will not oppose you, or I am much mistaken. Take my word for all the details. I will expect you by the earliest possibility. Don’t write, but come.”

In less than a week after I went to Genoa, and met in the steamboat from Marseilles, which was the quickest way of travelling then, a trembling, large-eyed, worn-out creature, not knowing if she were dead or alive, confused with the strangeness of everything, and the wonderful change in her own life. It was one of John’s bad days, and nobody who was not acquainted with the disease would have believed him other than dying. He was lying in a kind of half-conscious state when I took Ellen into his room. She stood behind me clinging to me, undistinguishable in the darkened place. The flush of the fever was going off; the paleness as of death and utter exhaustion stealing over him. His feeble fingers were moving faintly upon the white covering of his bed; his eyelids half shut, with the veins showing blue in them and under his eyes. But there was a faint smile on his face. Wherever he was wandering in those confused fever dreams, he was not unhappy. Ellen held by my arm to keep herself from falling. “Hope! you said there was hope,” she moaned in my ear, with a reproach that was heartrending. Then he began to murmur with his almost colourless yet smiling lips, “I will come again, my sweet and bonnie; I will come—again.” And then the fingers faintly beating time were still.

But no, no! Do not take up a mistaken idea. He was not dead; and he did not die. We got him home after a while. In Switzerland, on our way to England, I had them married safe and fast under my own eye. I would allow no more shilly-shally. And, indeed, it appeared that Mrs. Harwood, frightened by all the results of her totally unconscious domestic despotism, was eager in hurrying Ellen off, and anxious that John should come home. He never quite regained his former health, but he got sufficiently well to take another situation, his former em-

ployers, anxiously, aiding him to recover his lost ground. And they took Montpelier Villa after all, to be near Pleasant Place, where Ellen goes every day, and is, Mrs. Harwood allows, far better company for her father, and a greater relief to the tedium of his life, than when she was more constantly his nurse and attendant. I am obliged to say, however, that the mother has had a price to pay for the emancipation of the daughter. There is nothing to be got for nought in this life. And sometimes Ellen has a compunction, and sometimes there is an unspoken reproach in the poor old lady's tired eyes. I hope for my own part that when that eldest little girl is a little older Mrs. Harwood's life will be greatly sweetened and brightened. But yet it is she that has to pay the price; for no argument, not even the last severe winter, and many renewed "attacks," will persuade that old tyrant, invisible in his upper chamber, to die.

I know it is a vulgar weakness to seek a story where one ought to be satisfied with pure art. Picture and song, have they not a far loftier attraction in their own beauty than any your vulgar narrative can give them, my young friends ask me? Dear young friends! But we were not all born yesterday. We did not all have your training or your delicate perceptions. And is not suggestion, even of a story (though I allow that is a poor thing enough), one of the graces of art?

took  
goes  
her  
was  
ver,  
the  
And  
ken  
that  
I be  
pay  
any  
pper

o be  
tier  
give  
were  
our  
h I